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JAMES HAVELOCK CAMPBELL

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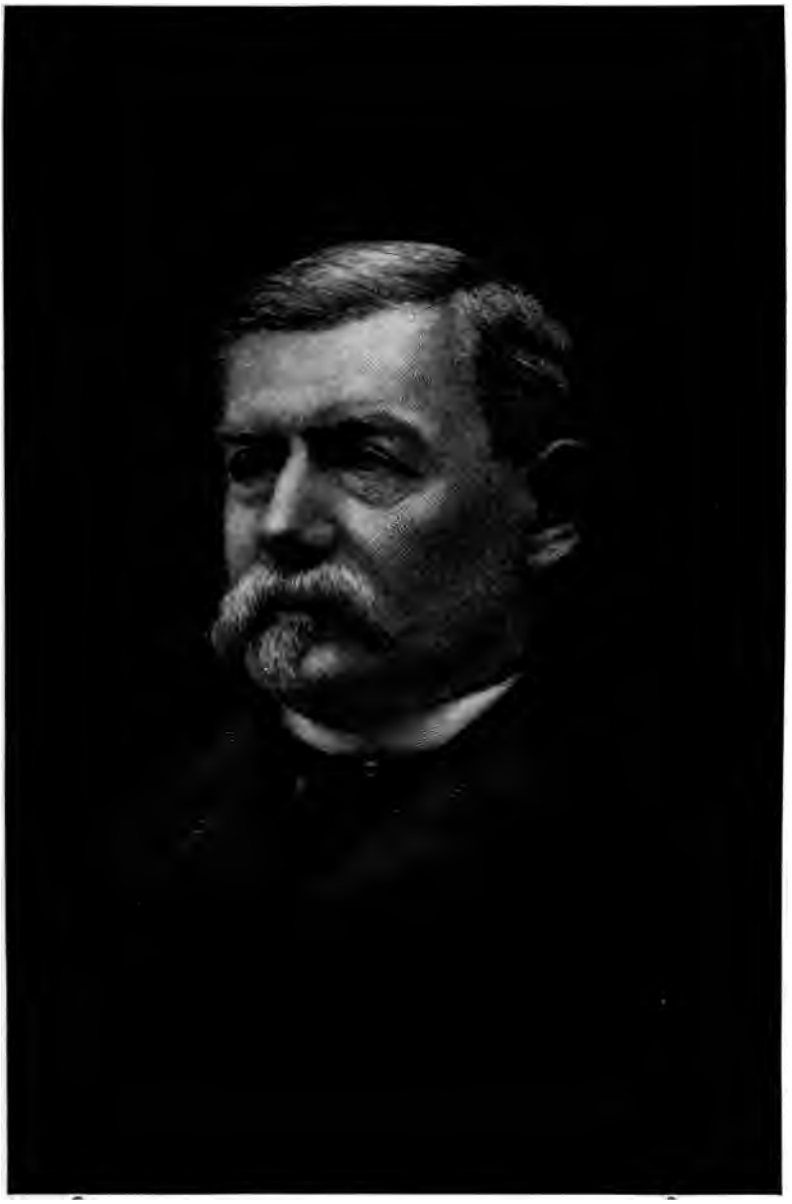

Very truly yours
Ed W Cullen

Frontispiece

McCLELLAN

A VINDICATION OF THE MILITARY CAREER OF GENERAL GEORGE B. McCLELLAN

A Liberal Critique

BY

JAMES HAVELOCK CAMPBELL

DEAN OF THE INSTITUTE OF LAW
UNIVERSITY OF SANTA CLARA
CALIFORNIA

"Who, in your opinion, was the ablest Northern general of the war?"

"McClellan, by all odds." —*Charles Francis Adams*

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McCLELLAN

Virginia. The other, Carswell McClellan, became an officer of the Army of the Potomac. George and Samuel McClellan were both physicians. George was a graduate of Yale College, and, having pursued his medical studies in the University of Pennsylvania, he took up the practice of his profession in Philadelphia, where he rapidly advanced in reputation until he became one of the most famous American surgeons of his day. He was a medical lecturer, first in the Jefferson Medical College, and afterward in the University of Pennsylvania; and he was a medical writer of high repute.

George Brinton McClellan, the subject of this work, was the son of Dr. George McClellan, whose life we have briefly sketched, and was born in the city of Philadelphia on the third day of December, 1826. After having received a good preliminary education, he entered the University of Pennsylvania, where he remained for two years. At this time he was appointed to the Military Academy at West Point.

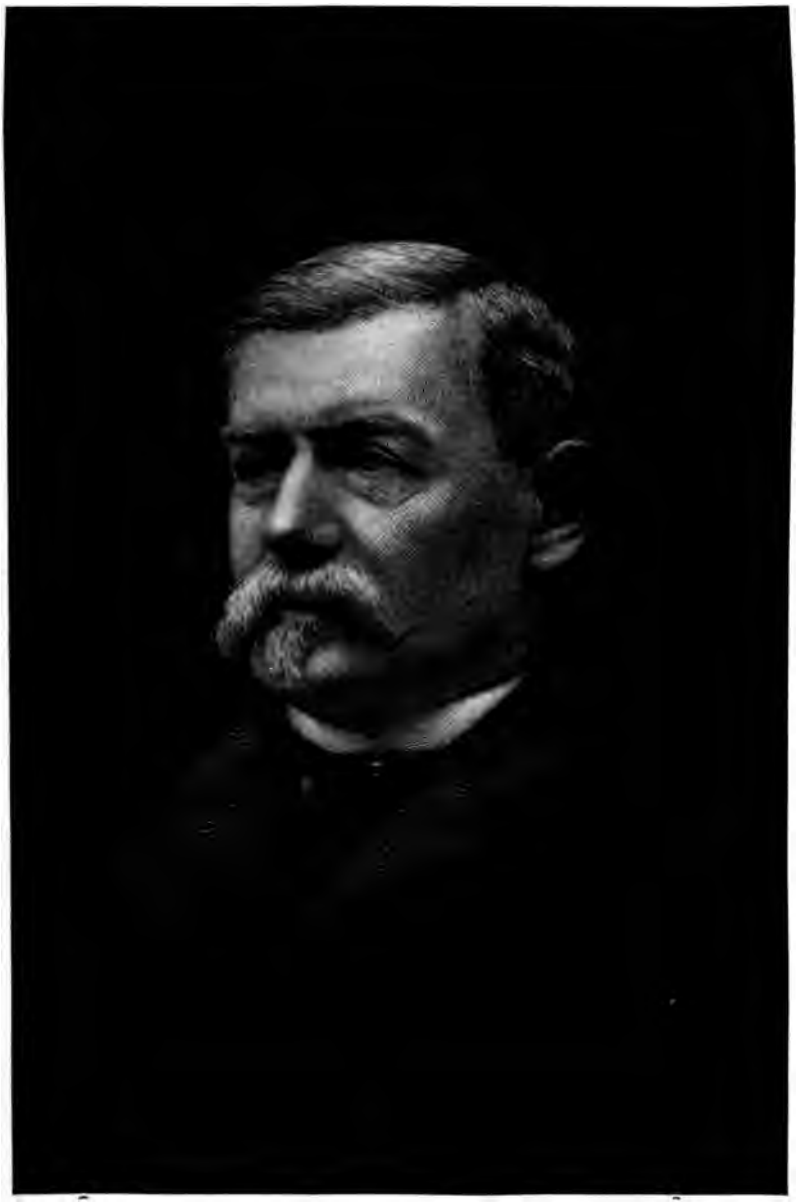
It is characteristic of General Michie's life of McClellan that the author at this point says: "Up to this time he had not exhibited any unusual talents," and "He was neither brilliant nor precocious, but was rated rather as a good student making steady progress"; yet he admits that McClellan had attained high class rank and that the rules of the Military Academy, which fixed the minimum age of entrance at sixteen years, were suspended to admit this youth at the age of fifteen years and seven months,—because of the impression he had made upon his examiners. The impression he then created was steadily retained, for he held a high place during the four years of his stay at the Academy and, although the youngest of the class of sixty, came out second in general standing on final graduation. The man of first rank was Charles S. Stewart, who afterward served as major of engineers in the Army of the Potomac. Stewart said of McClellan's school-days at West Point, among many flattering things: "He was well educated and, when he chose to be, brilliant." At that time there were in West Point many young men who became famous later as participants in the great civil struggle, on one side or the other. In various

classes of the Academy were: Grant, Stonewall Jackson, Fitz John Porter, Franklin, Hancock, A. P. Hill, Davis, Reno, Stoneman, Pickett, Pleasanton, and many others almost equally notable.

Upon his graduation, McClellan was made a brevet second lieutenant of engineers. A company of sappers and miners was formed at West Point, and he did valuable service in drilling the men in the details of their work. The war with Mexico was now in full progress, and after some preliminary work the company joined General Scott's army before Vera Cruz on March 9th, 1847. There were only ten engineer officers in the army at the time, of whom McClellan was the youngest; yet his skill and ability fitted him to take an active part with his colleagues in the preparations for the investment of the city, which greatly aided in bringing about the speedy success of the siege. In the stoutly contested advance from Vera Cruz to the City of Mexico the young lieutenant won laurels at every step, and drew forth lavish commendations from his superior officers. His skill, coolness, bravery, aggressiveness, energy, and good judgment at Cerro Gordo, Contreras, San Antonio, Churubusco, San Pablo, and Chapultepec were so extraordinary as to win the warmest praise from General Twiggs, General Persifor F. Smith, and the Commander in Chief, General Scott; and he was repeatedly recommended for promotion. On August 20th, 1847, he was made first lieutenant "for gallant and meritorious conduct" at Contreras and Churubusco; and Chapultepec secured for him a captain's commission on September 13th. He remained with the army in the City of Mexico until May 28th, 1848, and reached West Point again on June 22d, 1848.

It will be observed that when the last battle of the Mexican war was fought this plucky and brilliant young soldier still lacked two and a half months of the age of majority.

For three years after the close of the Mexican war McClellan taught military engineering at West Point. In this line of work his practical experience was a great aid. He was an admirer of Napoleon, and as a member of the Na-



Very truly yours
Wm McCullom

Frontispiece

CHAPTER II

ADIEU TO WEST POINT—FORT DELAWARE—TOURS OF EXPLORATION—THE CRIMEA

Captain McClellan's connection with the Military Academy ended on June 21st, 1851. He was then assigned to the position of assistant in the Corps of Engineers engaged in the construction of Fort Delaware, under the general direction of Brevet-Major Saunders, and he prosecuted this work until March 5th, 1852.

He now became a member of the expedition which had already been engaged for three years in the exploration of the sources of the Red River of Arkansas, under the command of Captain Marcy. McClellan's service in this line lasted only until June 27th, 1852.

After a pleasant tour of inspection as one of the staff of General P. F. Smith, his next important work was a series of surveys for the improvement of the harbors of Texas from Indianola to the Rio Grande. This involved a vast amount of detail, but we are told that such was his indefatigable industry that the commission was executed and his report handed to General Totten, Chief of Engineers, on the 18th of April, 1853.

As the project of a railroad to the Pacific was now occupying public attention, Congress had passed an act authorizing such surveys as the War Department might approve to fix upon the best route from the Mississippi to the Golden Gate. A corps of engineers was placed under the command of Governor Stevens, of Washington Territory, at one time a member of the National Corps of Engineers, with the proviso that Captain McClellan be put in charge of the western part of the line.

His orders were dated May 9, 1853, and after having

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ister there, but found that it was a matter outside of his jurisdiction and that they must go to St. Petersburg. The Prussian government was friendly, and they were promised every opportunity to observe and examine the military defenses of the country on their return.

At St. Petersburg to their chagrin they met with the same reception as at Paris, and a great deal of delay resulted. They utilized the time, however, in inspecting the defensive works of Russia and Prussia.

It was not until the 16th of October that they arrived at Balaklava. Quarters were assigned to them by General Simpson, the British commander, in the camp of the Fourth Division, at a point which overlooked a great part of the scene of war. They were supplied with everything that could secure their comfort and every possible aid, facility, and courtesy were extended to them by the British officers. The Turkish and Sardinian officers also gave all the assistance in their power. The work of the commission at the seat of war was therefore confined to the territory occupied by these three armies. They left Balaklava on an English vessel on the 2d day of November, 1855, and after a short stay in Constantinople and Scutari, where the hospitals of the allied armies were established, they repaired first to Vienna and then to every strongly fortified point in Europe, for the purpose of examining the military establishments and inspecting the defenses. In France they were given up to the guidance of subordinate officers, from whom little data was secured, because of the limited knowledge of the officers. On their return to England they were again the recipients of every attention, courtesy, and assistance desired by them. On the 19th day of April, 1856, they left England for home.

McClellan's reports were promptly submitted, have been greatly commended for their fullness and ability, and were found to be of much use to the war department of the United States. They included reports upon the Austrian, Prussian, French, English, and Sardinian cavalry and infantry, upon the composition and strength of the Russian army and the Russian, Austrian, French, and English engineer corps, and

a report was appended upon the needs of the United States cavalry and the necessary steps to be taken to supply them.

These reports constituted a treasury of information to military students, which was at once utilized with great avidity throughout the United States. McClellan's linguistic skill enabled him to make use of much valuable material in the shape of foreign publications. He also translated and adapted a Russian work on cavalry tactics and gave it to the war department. Many illuminating illustrations accompanied this, and a number of them were incorporated in the lectures and text-books of the Military Academy. He also devised a new cavalry saber and a modification of the Hungarian saddle, which went into general use. The reports are filled with comments and suggestions of evident value. He gives hearty praise to Todleben, the engineer who constructed the Russian fortifications, and to the valor of the soldiers who defended them.

No one can deny, not even General Michie, that McClellan won for himself fresh laurels by the successful and even brilliant manner in which his Crimean commission was executed.

CHAPTER III

CIVIL ENGINEER AND RAILROAD OFFICIAL

The general recognition of McClellan's capacity receives its most convincing assurance in the fact that in January, 1857, when he was barely thirty years old, the position of chief engineer of the Illinois Central Railroad was tendered to him, and he withdrew from the army to accept it. As was usual in his life, he at once devoted himself to a thorough mastery of this new field of activity and with such success that in the beginning of the next year he became vice-president of the company. His industry and his ability to master and attend to a great mass of detail were now signally exhibited. But above all other gifts of his finely equipped mind was his power of handling men and winning the esteem and love of all who came in contact with him. His just and considerate treatment of those beneath him in the service of the company and his readiness to observe and reward efficient work were especially notable and endearing traits. His home was in Chicago and he kept open house, especially for all his former comrades of the army. Among those who enjoyed his hospitality were many who afterward became famous in the ranks of the Confederacy. Joe Johnston, Buckner, Beauregard, and many other Southerners were his cordial friends and welcome visitors.

His schoolmate, Lieutenant Ambrose E. Burnside, who had served with McClellan throughout the Mexican War, had left the army in 1853 to go into the business of making a kind of rifle of which he was the inventor; and the prosecution of this enterprise he continued until 1858, at which time he was in the Slough of Despond because of the failure of his plans. McClellan played the part of the good Samaritan. He not only secured the position of cashier in a bank

for his friend, with a lucrative salary, but installed him and Mrs. Burnside in his luxurious home, of which she took charge. The large measure of success which McClellan met with in the management of the road in Illinois was so evident that he was not permitted to stay long undisturbed in the discharge of his present duties. The circle of his friends was large and many of them were interested in the eastern division of the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad Company; therefore in September, 1860, he was offered the presidency of that road, with a salary of ten thousand dollars a year. The acceptance of this position necessarily transferred his residence to Cincinnati. His previous railroad experience had qualified him to win new honors in this enlarged field.

It was a highly enviable and responsible position in which this young man of thirty-three found himself. He was now a married man. This was another result of the Red River expedition, for he met his affinity in the charming person of Ellen Mary Marcy, the daughter of Captain Marcy, the leader of the expedition. They were married on May 22, 1860, and the union proved to be an exceptionally happy one. McClellan then stood on the threshold apparently of a life of rare responsibility, honor, and prosperity. He was honored and beloved by all about him, and now the joys of a blissful home life came to make his existence one of almost ideal delight. The young couple were both of a strongly religious tendency and viewed marriage as a sacred relation, and no cloud ever arose to dim their perfect devotion, love, and confidence. No more practical example of actual soul-mates can the history of humanity afford, and the happiness of the honeymoon was but the beginning of the equal happiness of their life-long companionship.

But the uninterrupted continuance of such perfect joy is too much to expect in this world, and the young couple had hardly fixed a residence when their plans were blasted, their home despoiled of its head, and the young bride robbed of her mate by the rough and bloody hand of war.

The existence of slavery in a minority of the states, against the moral convictions and earnest protests of the rest of the

country, made war inevitable, unless a peaceful means could be found of abolishing the evil, and no satisfactory means had been found. The simplest and most obvious method of solving the problem was to compensate the owners equitably and emancipate the slaves. But the owners were opposed to emancipation and the abolitionists were opposed to compensation. There could be no property in human beings, the latter declared, and therefore no recompense for their release could in conscience be considered necessary. This was a narrow and senseless view, for it might easily have been seen that there *was* a cost to be met, directly or indirectly. Those who knew the spirit of the South surely knew that property so valuable, in which so vast an amount of money was invested, would not be given up without compensation and without a struggle. It was clear to the South that the plan of the agitators was to ruin the slaveholders, by putting an end to slavery without paying the owners for their slaves. To them the election of Mr. Lincoln in the fall of 1860 and the consequent triumph of the Republican party meant that this hard and inequitable policy would be carried out. To the opponents of slavery also this was undoubtedly the vital significance of the victory, and from it they confidently expected would flow, as a natural consequence, the extirpation of slavery, without expense to the nation.

Many conservative men were in favor of emancipation attended with a fair compensation. But they were not numerous enough. The avoidance of a direct expense is sometimes found to entail the incurring of an indirect expense infinitely greater. Of this the civil war affords the most luminous example to be seen in history.

The purpose of the opponents of slavery being clear and apparently on the eve of full fruition, the slaveholding South saw directly before it the disagreeable prospect of being despoiled of its most cherished asset without reimbursement, unless a desperate struggle was made for its protection and defense.

And so came the war—a war which cost hundreds of thousands of lives, the destruction of a vast amount of prop-

erty of historic as well as monetary value which could not be replaced, and the burdening of the country with a colossal debt, probably more than quadrupling the amount needed to make good to the owners the loss of their slaves.

The first overt act of resistance occurred on December 20th, 1860, when South Carolina seceded from the Union. Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, and Tennessee followed the lead of their sister state, and Maryland, Missouri, and Kentucky rendered very substantial aid to the cause. The first act of war of special importance was the capture of a considerable Federal force under General Twiggs at Indianola, Texas, and the appropriation of government stores to the value of $1,500,000. The small bodies of soldiers guarding the Indian and Mexican frontiers were likewise taken with their arms and supplies. The subtreasury at New Orleans with $500,000 stored therein was seized, as were also many vessels and fortifications. Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor, held by a Federal force under Major Robert Anderson, did not surrender until it had been subjected to thirty-six hours of bombardment. The seventy men who held it marched out with flying colors and were given safe passage to the North.

The claims of the various states of the South to the right of withdrawing at will from the Union did not stand upon equal ground. The claim most easily defensible was that of Virginia. The author is a New Englander and neither he nor any of his kin has ever lived in the South, but candor compels the statement that the claim of Virginia to sever her connection with the other states was legally, logically, and morally unanswerable and irresistible. Let us imagine the commonwealth of Mexico now determining to become one of the United States, yet mindful that she might repent, therefore coupling her action with every safeguard that the most brilliant and sagacious lawyers could devise, to reserve and protect her full and free right of withdrawal whenever she might become dissatisfied, thus making this privilege a condition precedent to her action and making her admission an acknowledgment of such right and an agreement that she might exer-

cise it at will. If we accepted her under such circumstances, we could not honorably resist her withdrawal, if she chose to leave us. That was precisely the position of Virginia. Every conceivable precaution was taken to preserve, beyond cavil or doubt, her absolute freedom to sever her connection with the Union at her own pleasure, and whatever might now be done to secure such an end was in her case ably and convincingly done under the direction of the most famous advocates of the time.

CHAPTER IV

THE CALL TO ARMS

McClellan, shortly after his marriage, had rented a house in Cincinnati for a term of three years, and foreseeing the approaching tempest, he had a proviso inserted in the lease that in case of war he might terminate it.

Actual hostilities were begun by the bombardment of Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor on the twelfth day of April, 1861. McClellan was at once in demand. He received telegrams from friends in New York informing him that the governor of that state desired to avail himself of his services; one from General Robert Patterson offering him the position of chief engineer of the state militia then being organized; and one from Governor Curtin, of Pennsylvania, tendering him the command of the Pennsylvania Reserves, a position which afterward fell to General McCall. McClellan promptly started for Pennsylvania to confer with Governor Curtin, but stopped over at Columbus, Ohio, to give Governor Dennison some information about the condition of affairs in Cincinnati.

He expected to remain only a few hours and then go on to Harrisburg. The laws of Ohio at that time provided that the command of the militia and volunteers called out must be given to general officers then in the militia. The legislature was in session, however, and the Governor within a few hours procured the passage of a bill allowing him to appoint as commander any resident of the state. The appointment was immediately offered to McClellan, and it was accepted by him; on the same day,—the 23d of April, 1861,—he entered upon the performance of his duties. Therefore he gave up his contemplated trip to Harrisburg.

The fifty counties of Virginia lying westward of the Allegheny Mountains were opposed to secession, and a Confederate

force was sent from Richmond under General Lee, to bring this section into line with the remainder of the state. General McClellan, upon his own responsibility and without orders, led a force into Western Virginia and dislodged the enemy in swift order from Philippi on the second of June, and shortly thereafter, successively, from Rich Mountain, Laurel Hill, and finally, on the 12th of July, from Carrick's Ford, driving the routed Southerners in disorderly flight into Eastern Virginia.

His rapid action and its results were characterized as *"aggressive, swift, and permanent,"* and a telegram was sent to him by General Scott, who was then at the head of the army, saying, "The General-in-Chief and, what is more, the Cabinet, including the President, are charmed with your activity, valor, and consequent success."

General Lee was severely criticized by the Southern press for his inability to maintain his position.

We are told that the campaign in Western Virginia was "a brilliant campaign . . . conducted agreeably to military principles, and its execution, as well as the fact that it was undertaken by General McClellan of his own motion, and without countenance from Washington, stamped him as a man of superior ability." [1] But before his exploits in West Virginia and before its occupation by General Lee, General McClellan had urgently, but vainly, requested permission to hasten with his troops into the Shenandoah Valley. He would thus not only have forestalled Lee's action, but also, as he says, he would have prevented the possibility of "Bull Run No. 1." [2]

On the 22d day of July, 1861, that being the day after the battle of Bull Run, and as the result of that disgraceful rout, General McClellan was called to Washington, and on the 26th day of the same month was placed in command of all the forces at the capital.

The Comte de Paris gives us the following attractive picture of the young commander at this time:[3] "Surrounded

[1] Swinton, *Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac*, 39.
[2] McClellan, *Own Story*, 47.
[3] *Battles and Leaders*, II, 112.

for the most part by young officers, he was himself the most youthful of us all, not only by reason of his fine vigor, the noble candor of his character, and his glowing patriotism, but also, I may add, by reason of his inexperience of men. His military bearing breathed a spirit of frankness, benevolence, and firmness. His look was piercing, his voice gentle, his word of command clear and definite. His encouragement was most affectionate, his reprimand couched in terms of perfect politeness. Discreet as a military chieftain should be, he was slow in bestowing his confidence, but once given it was never withdrawn."

He had won distinction in the Mexican War. He had won distinction in civil life. He had a happy home, an enviable position, and a salary of $10,000 a year. The Civil War was less than three months old and again he had won renown and the warm praise of the head of the army,—his former chief in Mexico,—for "his activity, valor, and success." The nation wanted him. His civil employers wanted him, and were holding his position open in the hope that the war might end and leave him free to return to them. And now he was the recipient of still higher honors and responsibilities, and, over the heads of a multitude of officers much older than himself and longer in the service, he was made general in chief of all the armies of the nation, and that not by a slight preference but, it might be said, by unanimous acclaim.

Truly he seemed to be the special favorite of fortune.

Thus far he had found himself advanced and applauded in every turn of effort to the full measure of his deserts. He was now to learn that the admiration due to merit and achievement may, in a certain environment and under certain conditions, be swallowed up in alarm and invite destruction. He was now to learn that a blameless life, a winning and lovable disposition, splendid talents, and conscientious and untiring industry, instead of rapidly multiplying devoted friends,—as had been the case formerly,—were now to be regarded in highly influential quarters as qualities inimical to certain interests struggling for supremacy and were about to create for him powerful, implacable, and relentless foes.

He was fearless when a stripling. His dash and bravery had secured the warmest encomiums of his generals; and the evidence, as we shall see, is abundant and convincing that he continued to the end to merit and receive similar praise for his cool, unperturbed, unostentatious, and unflinching courage.

He had constantly given proof of his energy in prior campaigns, and in the organization of the Army of the Potomac he continued to give it, even to the extent of endangering his life.

Courage and energy combined constitute aggressiveness. McClellan's aggressiveness had won for him all his military honors. It had made him commander of the Army of the Potomac and now General in Chief.

So we find the hero of our story at the age of thirty-six a brave, patriotic, conscientious, and energetic officer.

Yet, we are asked to believe that at the beginning of his thirty-seventh year this man, distinguished alike for his learning, capacity, energy, courage, and piety, without any supervening cause and when everything about him was calculated to stimulate all these qualities to the utmost, was suddenly and marvelously transformed into a hesitating, irresolute, timid being, uncertain of himself, afflicted with "the slows," lethargic, and almost incapable of action.

Such a change, in such a man, at such a time of life, is so contrary to human experience that it lies close to the verge of practical impossibility, and can be established only by evidence that excludes every other reasonable conclusion.

It will be seen that not only is such conclusive evidence or any atom of such evidence entirely lacking, but also that there is abundant evidence of the most satisfactory character to prove that the McClellan of the Peninsula was the brave, active, and aggressive McClellan of Contreras and Churubusco and West Virginia, but hemmed in and balked and beset with opposition, denuded of the indispensable factors of success, and forced to contend against paralyzing obstacles of field and flood, of season and conditions, against his judgment and advice and in spite of his most earnest protests.

The Ohio and Mississippi Railroad Company was so well pleased with its President and so eager to retain his services that they refused to accept his resignation for several months after he had withdrawn from the actual performance of his duties and until, as McClellan says, it was certain that he was inextricably involved in military affairs; but from the moment of his withdrawal he refused to accept any part of his yearly salary of ten thousand dollars.

CHAPTER V

CREATING AN ARMY AND DEFENDING A CITY

The North was unprepared for war. The capital of the nation was practically an unfortified city, and the District of Columbia, in which it was located, was carved from the Southern edge of Maryland,—a Southern state. The army at the capital amounted to only forty-two thousand men, and the first great duty thrown upon the new commander was the creation of an adequate army and the construction of such defenses as would make the capital of the nation entirely secure. It may be said, in brief, that this latter work was so thoroughly executed that the thought of attacking Washington was never afterward seriously entertained by the Confederates, and there is not the slightest doubt that this appearance of strength saved it from attack and capture in the summer of 1864, when it was insufficiently garrisoned.

The creation of that splendid force that on the 25th day of August, 1861, was christened the Army of the Potomac,—a name to become illustrious in the annals of the war,—was the first concern of General McClellan. The organization was pushed along as rapidly as the coming in of new recruits would permit, but this gathering of forces in Washington was much too slow, as we shall see, to please the energetic McClellan; and not only were sufficient men wanting, but there was also a disappointing lack of necessary materials and equipment. McClellan says:[1] "Up to the beginning of November, and still later, many of the infantry were insufficiently drilled and disciplined, and they were to a considerable extent armed with unserviceable weapons. Few of the cavalry were completely armed, and most of the volunteer cavalry were still very in-

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 78.

efficient. The artillery numbered 228 guns, but many of the batteries were still unfit to take the field. Transportation was still lacking for any extended movements."

And again he says:[2] "But it was not until the close of 1861, *too late for active operations,* that the infantry were reasonably well provided with serviceable arms; and even after that the calibers were too numerous, and many arms really unfit for service. The artillery material, likewise, arrived in insufficient quantities until the early part of 1862."

General McClellan strongly favored a heavy force of cavalry, to the extent of one-eighth to one-sixth of the infantry force; and, like his favorite exemplar,—the great Napoleon,—he relied strongly upon efficient and numerous batteries of artillery. If ample material had been at hand and the new troops had been gathered with sufficient swiftness, a few months would have sufficed to bring McClellan's plans to completion, but the levies came in with exasperating slowness. Even on the first day of April, 1862, notwithstanding every effort of McClellan, the goal was yet far distant, and the recruits who came in September or October, 1861, or still later, needed a few months of drill, discipline, and instruction to put them on the same footing in some measure with the earlier arrivals.

We are told that on August 19th, 1861, there were present for duty 42,000 effectives; on October 15th, 101,000; on December 1st, 136,852; on March 15th, 1862, 203,213.

McClellan possessed the administrative faculty in the highest degree, and his education and experience fitted him peculiarly for the work. He was a master of detail,—that characteristic of all famous commanders that Napoleon places as the first requisite of generalship.

The energy, swiftness, and masterly perfection with which McClellan carried on the great work of organizing the new army has been eulogized most warmly, even by his least friendly critics. Many of the best judges have given him unstinted praise. Lord Wolseley says:[3] "The more one

[2] *Ibid.*, 132.

[3] *North American Review*, CXLIX, 35.

studies the nature of this force as it marched and fought in the Peninsula, and as despite all its subsequent disasters it substantially remained throughout the war, the more marvelous does the ability, as well as the rapidity, with which General McClellan organized it, appeal to soldiers, who understand the magnitude and difficulty of the task he undertook."

Mr. Swinton has this to say of McClellan's achievement:[4] "It was a season of faithful, fruitful work amid which that army grew into shape and substance; and with such surprising energy was the work of organization pushed forward, that whereas General McClellan in July came into command of a collection of raw, dispirited, and disorganized regiments, without commissariat or quarter-master's departments and unfit either to march or fight, he had around him at the end of three months a hundred thousand men, trained and disciplined, organized and equipped, animated by the highest spirit and deserving of the fond name of The Grand Army of the Potomac. History will not refuse to affirm of this work the judgment pronounced by General McClellan himself: 'The creation of such an army in so short a time from nothing, will hereafter be regarded as one of the highest glories of the administration and the nation.' 'Had there been no McClellan,' I have often heard General Meade say, 'there could have been no Grant, for the army made no essential improvement under his successors.' "

General Alexander Webb says:[5] "McClellan proceeded to equip and discipline the Army of the Potomac with a skill and persistence which will be the admiration of military students for all time. He inspired the army with confidence; it believed him to be right in all his measures, because it loved and respected him. . . . The Army of the Potomac never lost the reputation of being the best equipped and most efficient army on this continent; and this reputation was due solely to General McClellan's system of organization."

Mr. Ropes bears equal tribute to McClellan's capacity.[6]

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[4] *Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac*, 66.
[5] *The Peninsula*, 169.
[6] *Story of the Civil War*, 164.

"McClellan had a genius for work of this kind. The army soon felt that in him it had a master and also a devoted and intelligent master,—in fact, a friend as well as a master. . . . He knew just how everything ought to be done."

Mr. Elson says:[7] "When he took control of the army it was a great disorganized mass, untried and discouraged, but possessing the one supreme virtue of patriotism. In four months McClellan had made of this crude mass a trained, disciplined, and organized army, equal to any that ever trod American soil."

Mr. Eggleston, a Southern writer, also bears testimony:[8] "McClellan's difficult problem was to organize the army anew; to create it out of chaotic elements, and in the face of the difficulties that were thrown in his way by its experience in battle. He must give it morale. . . . In the meanwhile McClellan was diligently strengthening himself. He was daily adding to his forces those new levies of volunteers which came freely from the North in spite of the disaster at Manassas. He was also strengthening the fortifications at Washington in a way that made the conquest of the city forever afterward a hopeless enterprise."

Rhodes, Paris, Michie, Dodge, de Joinville, Johnson, Pennypacker, Prime, and Whittier speak in terms of equal commendation.

The right to the lavish credit that has been given to McClellan by friend and foe alike in this particular was earned by almost incredible diligence and unceasing toil. On November 1st, 1861, he was made General in Chief of the Northern armies, and this brought a great additional burden upon him. In the midst of his work, and while with all his tireless and unsparing labor it was still far from finished, there came on the phenomenally severe winter of 1861-2. Deep snows and arctic cold for many months, beginning on November 25th, were succeeded by an almost incessant deluge of rain, which continued until the following July.

McClellan was an exceptionally hardy, strong, and robust

[7] *History of the United States*, III, 691.
[8] *History of the Confederate War*, I, 245.

man, but no constitution could stand the strain to which he was subjected after the first of November, 1861. On December 20th he was stricken down with typhoid fever. In a few days his recovery seemed uncertain; but his regular and simple life and his freedom from excesses now aided him, and on the 12th day of January, 1862, though still feeble, he again appeared upon the streets of Washington.

CHAPTER VI

NECESSITY FOR PREPARATION AND ORGANIZATION

When actual hostilities began, the South was in a measure prepared for war. We are told that, without even awaiting the organization of the new Confederate government, the seceding states seized all of the unprotected United States arsenals and fortifications within their limits, together with all the arms, stores, and munitions of war they contained. From the beginning of January, 1861, and probably in many cases still earlier, the work of organizing, arming, and instructing troops began throughout the seceded states.

To us who have the great advantage of looking backward at the events of the time it is almost inconceivable that at the beginning of the war so mistaken a view was generally entertained in the North of the magnitude of the struggle on hand. Almost at the outset a secret service bureau was established, for the purpose of securing as reliable information as possible of the strength of the enemy. It was in charge of Allan Pinkerton, the noted detective, and more than twenty years later he stoutly, and with much warmth and even indignation, vindicated the substantial accuracy of his reports against the belittling conclusions of writers who knew not whereof they spoke. Upon these reports McClellan relied. So did the President, the Secretary of War, Congress, and the whole North, for this was the official and sole source of information which could serve as the basis of action. Certain writers accuse General McClellan of having had hallucinations on this subject and of having grossly overestimated the numbers of the opposing forces; but he had no hallucination; he neither overestimated nor did he estimate at all. The work of gathering information was in the hands of a skilled specialist and he, like the Administration, acted upon the result. As

these reports were official, he was bound to recognize them and to conform his actions to them.

In the fall of 1861 and in the spring of 1862 the South was fresh, vigorous, and unexhausted. It had begun the war and had gone into it with a unanimity of enthusiasm unfelt in the North. Collegians had dropped their books, judges had left the bench, lawyers had closed their offices, and professors had abandoned the quiet of the academic groves to fill the Confederate ranks and mingle in the carnage of war. But as nearly all the available strength of the South was utilized at once there was no reserve force sufficient to maintain the original strength of her armies, which were consequently greatly depleted, in victory as well as in defeat, as the war progressed.

At the time mentioned, however, all the surrounding circumstances, as well as events that occurred afterward, confirm the report that the Southern Army of Virginia had a total strength of 150,000 that could be concentrated at Manassas in a few hours. Washington, it must not be forgotten, was a Southern city, hardly less the pride of the Southern people than Richmond itself. It was the city of their own Washington, and Jefferson, and Madison, and Monroe, and Calhoun, and Taylor, and Polk. It was filled with Southerners, and so it is not surprising that,—as Lord Wolseley, who was in Richmond at the time, directly bears witness,—a decision was hardly reached in the national capital before it was known to the leaders of the Confederacy. So it is idle to inform us just how few men were at Manassas at any given moment. The vital question is, how many men could be massed at Manassas before the Army of the Potomac could get there? A careful study of the existing conditions makes it reasonably sure that every soldier of Virginia would have been at Manassas before the Army of the Potomac could have actually started on its march.

Another fact touching the strength of the Army of Northern Virginia, and generally overlooked, is the frequent transfer of Southern forces from West to East. One day a Southern general is confronting a Union army in Kentucky or Ten-

nessee; a few days later we find his command swelling the forces of Johnston or Lee. That the Southern Army of Virginia received great accessions a few months later is easily established.

That the people of the North greatly misunderstood and undervalued both the numerical strength of the Virginian army and the fiery valor of the Southern soldiers is certain. They had never seen the impetuous onset of the Virginians. Their hearts had never lost a beat at the sound of the rebel yell. Bull Run was to them a disgraceful accident for which swift retribution should be meted out. The whole responsibility was thrown upon the commander, and many supposed in good faith that, brought back again to the field the next day by an abler leader, the Union troops would achieve a victory.

Colonel Dodge thus sets forth approvingly a comparison quoted from Palfrey of the soldier of the North with the soldier of the South.[1] "There can be no doubt about the proposition that greater results were habitually achieved by a certain number of thousands or tens of thousands of Lee's army than by an equal number of the Army of the Potomac. The reason for this is not to be found in any difference in patriotic zeal in the two armies. The first reason probably was that the different modes of life at the South and at the North made the Southern soldiers more fond of fighting than the Northern men. Not to mention the intense and more passionate character of the Southerner as compared with that of the Northerner, the comparatively lawless (not to speak invidiously) life at the South, where the population was scattered and the gun came ready to the hand, made the Southern man an apter soldier than the peaceful, prosperous, steady-going recruit from the North. The Southerners showed that they felt the *gaudium certaminis*. With the Northerners it was different. They were ready to obey orders, they were ready to do the work to which they had set their hands, they were ready to die in their tracks if need be, but they did not go to a battle as to a feast. They did not like fighting. Sheri-

[1] *Bird's-eye View of Our Civil War*, 116.

dan, Hancock, Humphries, Kearny, Custer, Barlow, and such as they were exceptions; but the rule was otherwise."

General Whittier says:[2] "The Army of Northern Virginia was composed of the best men of the South, who rushed to what they considered the defense of their country against a bitter invader. The North sent no such army to the field; its patriotism was of the easier kind. There was no rallying cry which drove the best, the rich, and the educated to join the fighting army. From William and Mary College thirty-two out of thirty-five professors enlisted; from Harvard one."

Mr. Russell, of the London Times, who was in Washington in the fall of 1861, gave it as his opinion that if the Army of the Potomac of that time met the Army of Virginia with anything like equal forces there would be grave danger of defeat. The Richmond *Examiner* of September 20th, 1861, expressed the view that McClellan's army could be defeated by twenty-five thousand Southern soldiers. General McClellan had a higher opinion, however, of the fighting stock of the North. He says:[3] "Given good officers, there are no men in the world who admit of a more thorough and effective discipline than the native-born Americans of the North. Their intelligence soon shows them the absolute necessity of discipline in an army and its advantages to all concerned; but the kind of discipline best adapted to them differs materially from that required by other races. Their fighting qualities are second to none in the world."

By the North in general the war seems to have been regarded as a three months' frolic. The first call for troops was only for 75,000 men and for three months' time. Upon the eve of the battle of Bull Run 4,000 men returned home—their enlistments had expired. Speaking of this, Mr. Eggleston says:[4] "At the North personal courage was not held to be the one supreme test of manhood as it was at the South. If any man in Beauregard's army had gone home because his enlistment had expired while the battle was pending, he could never-

[2] Monograph, 221.
[3] McClellan, *Own Story*, 40.
[4] *History of the Confederate War*, I, 235, 236.

more have visited any neighbor or aspired to any woman's hand; he would be everywhere treated with contempt and measureless scorn. His neighbors would not have sat on the same bench with him in church. He would have been instantly rejected as a juryman by both sides in every case. No other crime that he might commit could have added in the least degree to the depths of his degradation."

The surprise and panic of Bull Run can hardly be overestimated. Mr. Eggleston, continuing, says that the Union army was "before nightfall a wild-eyed and unconscious mob of irresponsible fugitives, intent only upon seeking safety, without any regard whatever to any obligation or impulse of honor or duty or shame or any impulse except the instinct of self-preservation." The taste lingered. The soothing balm of time was necessary to restore confidence and courage,—much more time than intervened between the heart-crushing defeat of Bull Run and the piling up of snows, which made military operations highly imprudent and full of perilous risk. It is a marvel that any space of time or any course of training or discipline could have transformed the quaking fugitives of Manassas into the unflinching soldiers of Beaver Dam and Malvern Hill.

After Bull Run, the necessity of a large army was so apparent that a call was at once issued for 300,000 men, to serve for three years or during the war.

General McClellan in his memorandum submitted to the President on August 2d, 1861, at the latter's request, sets out his view of the proper manner of conducting the war,—namely, not only to defeat their armed and organized forces in the field, but to display such strength as would convince the enemy, especially those of the governing, aristocratic class, of the impossibility of resistance. And to accomplish this he points out that the authority of the government would have to be supported by an overwhelming physical force. His view was that the invading army should consist of from 273,000 to 300,000 men. The war had been theretofore conducted upon what was afterward aptly designated "The pepper-box policy." The pepper-box policy consisted in sending

forces into all quarters at once; in defending large and small positions equally, and thus scattering an army which, if concentrated upon a single point, might have achieved decisive results. If the whole force available for Eastern service had been brought at once to Washington and pushed thence toward Richmond, it seemingly might have enveloped its adversary in superior numbers.[5] This designation of the Federal policy appears first in a letter from General Halleck to General McClellan of January 20th, 1862.[6]

The army which McClellan regarded as adequate was not as large in proportion as that afterward commanded by General Hooker and still later by General Grant.

In the advance upon Richmond in 1864, General Grant had immediately under him 122,000 effectives as against 62,000 effectives under General Lee. General Grant had also command of another force of 30,000 under General Butler, which met him upon the Rappahannock and formed a part of his army in its further advance to Richmond.

If the Administration did not assent to General McClellan's views as to the necessary force to be raised, this dissent should have been expressed promptly after his memorandum of August 2d was received. But there was apparently entire acquiescence in his plans until about December 1st,—in other words, until about the time of the convening of Congress.

By our luxurious and expensive American method of beginning with the smallest conceivable force which might possibly accomplish a desired result, and gradually and by minute advances using stronger and stronger means until at last the purpose is attained, we are inevitably led to the maximum expenditure of money, the maximum loss of time, and the maximum loss of life.

We Americans are much given to this method, which may be called the duelling system. If an insane person is to be apprehended, we send one or two officers when four or five would be necessary to make sure of avoiding unnecessary injury both to the officers and to the person to be apprehended.

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[5] *History of the Confederate War*, 209.
[6] Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, V, 109.

If a band of thieves escapes into the hills, a posse is sent after it exceeding very little in number those of whom they are in pursuit. If a mob is to be suppressed, we try successively a squad of policemen, the available force of the city, and then perhaps of the county, and finally we are often forced,—by the very temptation which we offer,—to call upon the aid of the state, and occasionally even of the nation. This manner of procedure is a premium upon resistance,—an invitation to a struggle. It involves always a waste of time and often of money and of blood. An example of this upon a larger scale was seen in our military operations in the Philippines. If a sufficiently overawing force had been sent there at the outset, as soon as it was evident that a considerable army was necessary, the insurrection would have been speedily suppressed, with comparatively little cost and loss of life; but we followed our favorite method, and so suffered the largest expenditure of time, money, and life.

McClellan's idea was to secure the ends of economy of time, money, and life by invading the South with an army so large and well organized as to banish all hope of successful opposition.

If the power had rested in McClellan at the beginning of the war, he would have gathered a force of 300,000 men to operate in the East and one of equal size to take action, if necessary, in Eastern Tennessee and elsewhere in the West. But it probably would not have been necessary, for the natural tendency of the march from Washington would have been to transfer the whole scene of conflict to the territory East of the Alleghenies, and there is no reason to doubt that the year 1861 would have seen the end of the war. What privations, what loss of property and life, what agony in hundreds of thousands of hearts that course would have saved!

But McClellan's view was soon abandoned by the administration; and the result was the enlistment of 3,700,000 men by the North during the war, the loss of three years' time, and incalculable expense and injury and waste of life.

CHAPTER VII

THE FAVORITE OF FORTUNE

As we are now approaching the critical point of McClellan's life, it will be interesting to take a general view of the chief performers in events so full of intrigue as strongly to resemble a mediæval drama of dark conspiracies and underground plots.

McClellan is universally presented to us as a man of rare piety and of the highest ideals. Mr. Prime says of him: "His religion was deep, earnest, practical; not vague or ill-defined to himself or others, not obtrusive, but outspoken when occasion required, and when outspoken frank and hearty. For it was part and parcel of his soul. . . . In all his life, public and private, every purpose was formed, every act was done, in the light of that faith. It was this which not only produced in him that stainless purity of walk and conversation which all who knew him recognized, but also gave him strength for all the great works of a great life. It was this which created that magnetic power so often spoken of, which won to him that marvelous devotion of his soldiers, made all who knew him regard him with affection, and those who knew him best love him most."

His own letters to his wife are the best proof of this. A few extracts will suffice. "I know how weak I am, but I know that I mean to do right and I believe that God will help me and give me the wisdom I do not possess. Pray for me that I may be able to accomplish my task." [1] "I pray every night and every morning that I may become neither vain nor ambitious, that I may be neither depressed by disaster nor elated by success, and that I may keep one single object in view—

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 85.

the good of my country." [2] "I still hope that the God who has been so good to me will continue to smile upon our cause and enable us to bring this war to a speedy close so that I may have the rest that I want so much . . . but the will of God be done." [3] "I do not see how anyone can fill such a position as I do without being constantly forced to think of higher things and the Supreme Being. The great responsibility, the feeling of personal weakness and incompetency, of entire dependence upon the will of God, the thousand circumstances entirely beyond our control that may defeat our best laid plans, the sight of poor human suffering—all these things *will* force the mind to seek rest above." [4]

"God has disposed of events as to Him seemed best. I submit to his decrees with perfect cheerfulness, and as sure as he rules I believe that all will yet be for the best." [5] "I hope and trust that God will watch over, guide, and protect me." [6]

It is hard to imagine a man of McClellan's capacity of mind,—one who had advanced so rapidly as he,—so entirely free from political ambition or the desire of being in the public eye. A few passages from his letters will make this evident.

"I receive letter after letter, . . . alluding to the presidency, dictatorship, etc. As I hope one day to be united with you forever in heaven, I have no such aspiration." [7] "How I wish that God had permitted me to live quietly and unknown with you!" [8] "I shall be only too glad when all is over and I can return where I best love to be." [9] "That is my idea of happiness now—rest with you and the baby." [10] "Oh, how ardently I pray for rest—rest with you. I care not where, only that I may be alone with you." [11]

At a time when certain politicians imagined that he was wondering how he might oust Mr. Lincoln from the presidency and take possession of it this passage in a letter to his

[2] *Ibid.*, 173, 174.
[3] *Ibid.*, 356.
[4] *Ibid.*, 402, 403.
[5] *Ibid.*, 445.
[6] *Ibid.*, 450.
[7] *Ibid.*, 85.
[8] *Ibid.*, 175.
[9] *Ibid.*, 398.
[10] *Ibid.*, 408.
[11] *Ibid.*, 445.

wife will show what kind of political ambition was occupying his mind: "I wonder whether the baby will know me. I fear that she will be afraid of me and won't come to me. Would not that be mortifying? I hope the dear little thing will take to me kindly. I should feel terribly if she should refuse to have anything to do with me. Bless her sweet little ladyship! She must be a great comfort to you; and we will be happier than any kings and queens on earth if we three are permitted to be together again, before May changes much." [12]

On the 6th day of September, 1861, General McClellan issued an order to the Army of the Potomac urging the proper observance of the Sabbath, which begins with these words: "We are fighting in a holy cause, and should endeavor to deserve the benign favor of the Creator," and ends as follows, "The observance of the holy day of the God of Mercy and of Battles is our sacred duty."

The innermost sanctuary of the heart of the general has been exposed to the gaze of the world by the publication of these letters to his wife. Even among the best of men very few could go unhurt through such an ordeal. Not all men will understand this. But every man who tenderly loves his wife and feels that in her devoted heart he is idealized, and that he longs to maintain that innocent worship, will understand it. Mr. Rhodes has had the manhood to see this and the honesty to call attention to it. Other writers are unmindful of it and have ungraciously used these private letters to injure General McClellan; for instance, to prove that he was conceited. In such heart revelations to his wife there is hardly one man in ten thousand of actual power and efficiency who would not appear conceited. Can we imagine a man of rare capacity who is unaware of his gifts or puts no value upon them, or who would not glorify them to an affectionate wife? But that is not the worst feature. The worst feature is the concealment, the uncandid silence as to the conclusive proof which these letters afford of McClellan's kindness of heart, sincerity of purpose, unflinching courage, forgiving spirit, devotion to country, piety, and love of home and wife and his

[12] McClellan, *Own Story*, 452.

little May and the charms of a quiet life. I feel sure that no man who is happy in his domestic circle or in whom the domestic instinct is lively can read these letters without having his heart warm to the writer.

"General McClellan's reputation in the army was of the highest. He was known as one of the most accomplished officers in the service. He had been graduated with the highest rank at the military academy. In the Mexican war he had been twice brevetted for gallantry and had attracted the favorable notice of his superiors. The only service which he had had an opportunity to render in the Civil War had been brilliantly performed and had resulted in permanent success. He possessed most engaging manners; and few people could resist the charm of his address, so that he soon became the idol of his soldiers." [18]

[18] Ropes, *Story of the Civil War*, I, 163.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LINCOLN OF 1861

Abraham Lincoln was at this time in his fifty-third year. He was born on Nolin Creek, three miles west of Hodgdensville, Kentucky, on February 12th, 1809. It was a forest region, with many bears and other wild animals in the solitudes around. His mother died nine years later. In the following year his father married Sally Bush Johnston. She was an intelligent, good woman, and she stimulated him to study. The Lincolns then lived a short distance east of Gentryville, Kentucky. When a youth Abraham worked as a farm hand and was a clerk in a store at Gentryville.

He was athletic, fond of speaking and argument, and gathered up a great fund of anecdote. In 1830 the family moved into Sangamon County, Illinois. Here he split rails for a time to make fences for the farm.

In 1831 he helped to build a flat boat and went to New Orleans in it. While there he saw slaves chained and flogged. For several years after that he resided in New Salem, Illinois, where he was in turn clerk, grocer, surveyor and postmaster; and he was also pilot of the first boat which ascended the Sangamon. "Abe," as he was familiarly called, next turned his attention to the study of the law and went into politics and stump-speaking. He took a nominal part in the Black Hawk War. In 1832 he ran for the legislature, was successful on a second trial in 1834, and thereafter was twice re-elected.

He was admitted to the bar in 1837, and he opened an office at Springfield, which became the capital in that year, largely through his efforts. For a time he struggled along at the bar. Lincoln was always, but especially at this time, astonishingly susceptible to the charms of the fair sex. In

1842 he married Mary Todd, a bright, vivacious girl of excellent family, for whose hand Stephen A. Douglas was also a suitor. In 1846 Lincoln went to Congress for one term, but gained no new distinction there. His experience, however, made him realize his meager equipment of learning and incited him to study for a time. He plunged into Euclid with a persistence and assiduity that knew no relaxation until he had mastered as much of it as he desired.

In 1854 his interest and activity in politics were resumed. His speeches against Douglas that fall secured his candidacy for the United States Senate, but Trumbull was chosen. In 1856 he first spoke out against slavery. At this time the Republican party had its origin. Lincoln was one of those spoken of for the vice-presidency, but Drayton won the nomination. In 1858 Lincoln was nominated against Douglas. In their joint debates the question devised by Lincoln to entrap Douglas finally ruined Douglas and made Lincoln president. It was this: Can the people of a territory lawfully exclude slavery against the protest of any citizen of the United States? If Douglas should say, no, he would lose Illinois and the election. If he should say, yes, he would enrage the South. The nearer magnet drew him. He said yes, as Lincoln hoped and expected. Douglas won that election, but lost the presidency. That question split the Democracy into adherents and opponents of Douglas, led to the election of Lincoln, and thereby to the Civil War. As the result, Lincoln was the Republican candidate for the presidency two years later. Among his rivals for the honor were Seward, Chase, and Bates. In the election Lincoln received 950,000 votes less than a majority, but having more votes than any other candidate in the electoral college, he was elected. His cabinet at the outset was not the expression of his own free preference, but was selected under the pressure of inexorable necessity, for the purpose of putting strength and vigor and a hope of further life into the new party. If in the next election the Democracy should become harmonized and reunited, the administration seemed doomed to inevitable defeat. So he saw that there must be no dissension or jealousy in the infant phalanx of

Republicanism. That politics makes strange bedfellows was never so well exemplified. William H. Seward was Secretary of State; Salmon P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury; Simon Cameron, Secretary of War; Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy; Edward Bates, Attorney General, and Montgomery Blair, Postmaster General. A warm admirer says: "Lincoln used the patronage of his office to feed the hunger of the various factions. Therefore he would always give more to his enemies than he would to his friends. . . . Adhesion was what he wanted; if he got it gratuitously, he never wasted his substance paying for it."

In his stories, "It was the wit he was after, the pure jewel, and he would pick it out of the mud or dirt as readily as he would from a parlor table." [1] Lincoln was never continuously studious, so he did not become learned, even in the law. His habits were unfavorable to this. He had no love of method, no capacity for detail. The lore of books was difficult for him, but what he acquired he kept in use, constantly burnished, always at hand. His love of debate, and his practice in it almost from childhood, gave him in maturer years a force and felicity of diction which the most cultured academician might well envy. Many of his letters are speeches of high merit in expression and construction. At least twenty of these letters seem to me higher examples of oratory in method, style, and conclusion than the famous Gettysburg Address, which presents no line of reasoning, no development of a novel conception, and, although it has a single admirable sentence, ends with a marring and undignified platitude,—namely, the phrase "Government of the people, for the people, and by the people." Mr. Lincoln probably heard that phrase in the very first political speech he ever attended, for from time immemorial our people have loved to hear this trite but swelling expression, and it has not been withheld from them. In April, 1858, he saw and marked a similar phrase in a speech of Theodore Parker. As good illustrations of Mr. Lincoln's reasoning and fertility of resource, see his letter to Mr. O. H. Browning of September 22d, 1861,[2] in which he triumphantly flouts the

[1] Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln*, II, 243, 244.
[2] *Letters*, Centenary edition, I, 81.

notion that the President could emancipate the slaves, and then see his letter to the Hon. J. C. Conkling of August 26th, 1863, in which he triumphantly vindicates the right of the president to emancipate the slaves under existing circumstances.[3] The commencement of his letter to Carl Schurz, dated November 24th, 1862, is so characteristic that I insert a passage from it here: "You think I could do better; therefore you blame me. I think I could not do better; therefore I blame you for blaming me." [4]

In their pungency and directness many of his letters remind us strongly of Junius, but his exemplar was Calhoun.

It is astonishing that a man to whom culture gave so little should have acquired such a clear, neat, and even dainty style. It draws us strongly and makes us feel that, in his case, nature encased a gem in a plain and inartistic setting, and inclines us to reject many criticisms as the offspring of misunderstanding or malevolence. Lincoln was abstemious and self-denying in his habits, and when we consider his life and its environment it is a marvel that there is so little to cavil at. We learn from the biography of Lincoln by Mr. Herndon, his former partner and loving friend, that Lincoln was "inordinately ambitious." [5] He knew all the wires of politics and used them, yet he was distrustful of his own ability, save where his feet were firmly set on familiar ground.[6] These traits made him highly susceptible to the influence of the more learned, more polished, and better equipped men who surrounded him in the chief magistracy and with whom he now came into daily contact.

Seward, Chase, Stanton, and later Bates all felt that the motive of their appointment was to foster the new party, which was still a weakling, and the emotion of gratitude was not ardent in them.

"To Chase's mind and that of most of the old Republicans, Lincoln was an accidental president. Congress pulled

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[3] *Ibid.*, 180.
[4] *Ibid.*, III, 100.
[5] Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln*, I, 191.
[6] *Diary of Gideon Welles, Atlantic*, CIII, 364, 367.

against him—and Seward, Chase, and Stanton, each in his own way, tested the President's mastery. Stanton's practice was to defy the President in minute matters by refusing to carry out his orders or by returning a commission with the curt endorsement, 'The President may get another Secretary of War, but this Secretary of War will not sign that paper.' "[7]

The members of the cabinet were willing, for the sake of their own political future, to aid in building up the party, but each sought to manage his own department as if in that realm he were president. This purpose was carried out to such an extent that the President practically lost the aid of his cabinet as the deliberative and advisory body intended by the constitution, and, as the Secretary of the Navy of that period informs us, "cabinet discussions became almost unknown,"—just when they were most necessary,—and the government became a government by department, which means that, except in very rare instances, each member had untrammeled sway in his own special province.[8]

In June, 1863, a meeting of the Cabinet was held to discuss the question of General Hooker's successor, but it was quickly evident that a successor had already been selected by the War Department.[9]

Lincoln and McClellan had known each other previously;[10] their relations were very pleasant and their meetings almost daily from the time of the arrival of McClellan in July, 1861, until he was prostrated with typhus in the middle of December. Then the daily consultations ceased, and from the despondent reports it seemed certain for a time that a new commander must be found. Sinister influences were at once set in motion, and the period of plots and underground operations was soon entered upon.[11]

That illness was a national calamity in its results, for it separated two men, each of whom could have admirably sup-

[7] "Life of Salmon P. Chase," *American Statesmen Series*, 133.
[8] *Atlantic*, CIII, 156, 364, 365, 659, 761.
[9] *Atlantic*, CIII, 763; *Harper's*, XLV, 741.
[10] McClellan, *Own Story*, 162.
[11] *Ibid.*, 160, 162, 170, 195.

plemented the other for the general good, one by his learning, military genius, and administrative skill, and the other by his practical shrewdness and thorough knowledge of the world of politics.

CHAPTER IX

A TALLEYRAND AND A MACHIAVELLI

To many people Edwin M. Stanton is known only as the great War Secretary; as a model of patriotism, enthusiastic zeal, and tireless energy, who at a great loss to his personal interests abandoned a lucrative and rapidly increasing practice for his country's good and who wore himself out and hastened his death by his labors in her service.

But, unless the evidence grossly misrepresents him, this is not a picture of the true Stanton. *Tros Tyriusque mihi nullo discrimine agetur.* Democrat or Republican were alike to him, if he could but keep in power. Buchanan, Lincoln, Johnson, Grant; he served under three of them and was under appointment to serve under the fourth when death intercepted the purpose.

He possessed all the astuteness of the French diplomat and all the plotting brain of the Florentine. He could be as affable and smiling as either when it served his purpose. He lacked only their suavity in his official contact with the public.

Such mountains of imprecation were piled upon his head and even upon his memory that it is fortunate indeed that we have the testimony of many warm, sincere, and devoted admirers to inform us of what he really was.

Mr. T. B. Thorpe says:[1] "At the time Mr. Stanton died he was probably the object of more bitter personal hatred and therefore the victim of grosser misrepresentation as regards his real character than any of his contemporaries. Nor has death, which proverbially tempers and finally destroys personal animosities, up to this time (1872) materially softened this intense dislike on the part of his enemies, for his memory has been pursued with ruthless cruelty beyond the grave. It

[1] *Harper's*, XLV, 737.

has been published and by some believed that Mr. Stanton, borne down by the remorse of conscience, found life unendurable and, to escape its torments, filled a suicide's grave."

Mr. Thorpe sets forth,[2] without realizing the effect upon a disinterested reader, the rough and indeed brutal manner in which Stanton with few exceptions treated those who were forced to call upon him. An officer in uniform filled him with furious rage. Without waiting to learn how urgent and necessary his business might be, Stanton "would turn upon him like a tiger at bay and roar out: 'Come, sir; what are you doing in Washington? If you are not needed at the front, I'll see about mustering you out.' Except as to a few he disregarded all the usual amenities of life."

Edwin M. Stanton was born at Steubenville, Ohio, on December 19th, 1814. In his earlier years poverty claimed him for her own and cut off the completion of his schooling. Like Lincoln, he had a long struggle against adversity; but while in Lincoln adversity created a kindliness and sympathy for the distress of others; in Stanton it seems to have fostered only a spirit of cynicism, save as to those far beneath him in position,—a cynicism which was aggravated by his lack of robust health. He attended Kenyon College for a time, but from want of means was prevented from concluding the course. He was admitted to the bar in 1836. From 1842 to 1845 he was the official reporter of the Supreme Court of Ohio.

He gained fame in the Supreme Court of the United States in the case of Pennsylvania against the Wheeling Bridge Company. This brought him so much business before the court that in 1856 he took up his residence in Washington. In 1858 he spent nearly a year in California as counsel for the United States in litigation connected with the New Almaden Mine, near San Jose. While in California he discovered a vast amount of fraud in Mexican land titles. In December, 1860, he was appointed Attorney General by James Buchanan and went out of office with him in the following March; then he resumed his legal practice. His entry into

[2] *Ibid.*, 740, 741.

office was a new era in his life. While he was on terms apparently of the warmest personal friendship with Buchanan the surrounding conditions and the election of Lincoln brought to his notice the birth of a new party, which he sagely foresaw was likely to become powerful; and he at once began to ingratiate himself with its leaders, one of the most prominent of whom was Charles Sumner. At Stanton's suggestion a meeting was held at Sumner's house, as we learn from the latter, at one A. M.,[3] wherein Stanton unfolded to Sumner "the plan of the traitors to obtain possession of the Capital and the national archives,"—a plan which careful historians now think had no existence.

We are told in the same article that about the same time he was in communication with the leading Republicans "to serve his imperiled country menaced by a foul and wicked revolt." It appears that these conferences, like the first above mentioned, were not proud and open displays of patriotism, but furtive affairs of darkness and secrecy. "There is direct and indirect testimony from Republican leaders that during this period Stanton, a stubborn and prejudiced Buchanan Democrat, was in secret communication and concert with the leading spirits of the opposition."[4] After the new administration was installed in March, 1861, Mr. Stanton expressed his scorn of it in the most violent terms in confidential letters to Mr. Buchanan. On April 11th, 1861, he wrote: "The administration has not acquired the confidence and respect of the people here." Again, "The feeling of loyalty to the government has greatly diminished in this city." And again, "They all act as though they meant to be ready to cut and run at a minute's notice. Their tenure is like that of a Bedouin on the sands of the desert. This is sensibly felt and talked of by the people of the city, and they feel no confidence in an administration that betrays so much insecurity. And besides a strange feeling of distrust in the candor and sincerity of Lincoln personally and of his cabinet has sprung up. . . . No one speaks of Lincoln or any member of his cab-

[3] *Atlantic*, XXVI, 466; Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, V, 133, n.
[4] Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, V, 132.

inet with respect or regard."[5] On the next day he writes: "The impression here is held by many that the effort to reinforce [Anderson] will be a failure; second, that in less than twenty-four hours from this time Anderson will have surrendered; third, that in less than thirty days Davis will be in possession of Washington."[6] "No description could convey the panic that prevailed here after the Baltimore riot and before communications were reopened. This was increased by reports of the trepidation of Lincoln that were circulated through the streets, and every family packed up their effects. Women and children were sent away in great numbers; provisions advanced to famine prices. In a great measure the alarm has passed away, but there is still a deep apprehension that before long this city is doomed to be the scene of battle and carnage."[7] On June 8th, 1861, he wrote: "Indeed the course of things for the last four weeks has been such as to excite distrust in every department of the government."[8] On July 26th, 1861, he wrote: "The dreadful disaster of Sunday [Bull Run] can scarcely be mentioned. The imbecility of this administration culminated in that catastrophe. An irretrievable misfortune and national disgrace never to be forgotten are to be admitted to the ruin of all peaceful pursuits and national bankruptcy as the result of Lincoln's running the machine for five months. It is not unlikely that some changes in the War and Navy department may take place, but none beyond these two departments until Jeff Davis turns out the whole concern. The capture of Washington seems now to be inevitable. During the whole of Monday and Tuesday it might have been taken without any resistance. The rout, overthrow, and utter demoralization of the whole army is complete. General McClellan reached here last evening. But if he had the ability of Cæsar, Alexander, or Napoleon, what can be accomplished? Will not Scott's jealousy, cabinet intrigues, and Republican interference thwart him at every step?"[9]

[5] Curtis, *Life of James Buchanan*, II, 540.
[6] *Ibid.*, 541.
[7] *Ibid.*, 548.
[8] *Ibid.*, 552.
[9] *Ibid.*, 559.

On July 23d, 1861, he wrote to General Dix: "The state of affairs here is desperate beyond any conception, and if there be any remedy and any shadow of hope to prevent this government from utter extinction it must come from New York without delay." [10]

[10] Rhodes, *History of the United States*, III, 376.

CHAPTER X

STANTON COURTS M'CLELLAN—HIS CONTEMPT FOR LINCOLN

General McClellan says:[1] "I had never seen Mr. Stanton, and probably had not even heard of him, before reaching Washington in 1861. Not many weeks after arriving, I was introduced to him as a safe adviser on legal points. From that moment, he did his best to ingratiate himself with me, and professed the warmest friendship and devotion. I had no reason to suspect his sincerity and therefore believed him to be what he professed. The most disagreeable thing about him was the extreme virulence with which he abused the President, the administration, and the Republican party. He carried this to such an extent that I was often shocked by it. He never spoke of the President in any other way than as the 'Original gorilla,' and often said that Du Chaillu was a fool to wander all the way to Africa in search of what he could so easily have found in Springfield, Illinois. Nothing could be more bitter than his words and manner always were when speaking of the administration and the Republican party. He never gave them credit for honesty or patriotism, and very seldom for any ability." Mr. Stanton's first meeting with Mr. Lincoln seemed to impress him with an intense contempt, and I have looked in vain for any indication that gratitude, affection, and admiration ever supplanted it.

Mr. Thorpe[2] is in error in his belief that their first meeting was in Washington in 1861, and that it was entirely cordial. It took place in Cincinnati in the summer of 1857 and left so unpleasant an impression in the mind of Mr. Lincoln that he disliked to visit Cincinnati forever afterward.

Mr. Herndon tells us[3] that Mr. Lincoln was engaged by

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 151, 152.
[2] *Harper's*, XLV, 737.
[3] Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln*, II, 22.

the defendant in the case of McCormick vs. Manny, brought for an alleged infringement of the patent for the famous reaper. It was to be tried in the U. S. Circuit Court at Cincinnati. Reverdy Johnson, a noted Baltimore lawyer, was on the other side; and Lincoln was ambitious to cross swords with him. Accordingly, he prepared himself with great care. On reaching Cincinnati he found that fear of Johnson's skill had induced his client to retain Mr. Stanton also. But no special arrangement to the contrary having been made with Mr. Lincoln, he still had control of the case, and by the traditions and customs of the bar was the counsel of all others who should have spoken in the argument. Only one of them could speak, however; and Mr. Stanton wished to speak, and craftily laid his plan. He suggested to Mr. Lincoln that Lincoln should speak. As Mr. Lincoln was already in charge, this was more than superfluous. Stanton should have awaited a suggestion from Lincoln. Mr. Lincoln, obviously out of courtesy only, said: "No. You speak." Stanton instantly replied, "I will," and started off. Mr. Lincoln was greatly grieved and mortified; he took but little more interest in the case, though he remained until the conclusion of the trial. He seemed to be greatly depressed. Stanton, in his brusque and abrupt way, it is said, described him as "a long, lank creature from Illinois, wearing a dirty linen duster for a coat, on the back of which the perspiration had splotched wide stains that resembled a map of the continent." On his return, Lincoln said that "he had been roughly handled by that man Stanton; that he heard Stanton saying 'where did that long-armed creature come from, and what can he expect to do in this case?' " Messrs. Nicolay and Hay [4] treat this incident as trivial, but they are obviously mistaken, or Lincoln, who was a fair and just man by nature, would not have been so grieved and angry about it.

The incident throws light on Stanton's attitude toward the President as shown in the Buchanan letters.

Yet, in spite of his heartfelt enmity toward Mr. Lincoln and in spite of the antipathy which he had inspired in the

[4] Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, V, 133, 134.

mind of the President, it is evident that Mr. Stanton soon made up his mind to regain a place in the Cabinet. He felt no doubt that his place was there. It was not his fault that this uncouth and unfit man had somehow got into power. He regretted it, but his destiny was not to be stayed or diverted by it. He won the good-will of General McClellan. The General knew no more of the methods of politicians of that type than a bee does of buttermilk. He was so completely ensnared and befooled that one day, worn out with his heartbreaking task, and shortly before his collapse, he wrote to his wife that "he was concealed at Stanton's to dodge all enemies in the shape of browsing Presidents, etc." Stanton sought the favor not only of the leading Republicans generally, as we have seen, but especially of Seward and Chase, who more than any others secured his selection as Secretary of War. "Many patriotic citizens and eminent capitalists" urged Mr. Lincoln to appoint him, and the latter at last yielded to the pressure, feeling assured among other motives of action that he was conferring a great favor on General McClellan,—a fact which in itself demonstrated the fine machiavellian hand of Mr. Stanton.

We think that a man is to be judged not so much by the execration of his enemies as by the admissions of his friends.

Mr. Stanton has had many zealous champions, but alas! for their defense; it virtually admits the most vital counts of the indictment.

We have heard from Mr. Thorpe. We will now hear from the Hon. H. L. Dawes, an equally fond advocate, who designates Mr. Stanton as "one of the greatest men of his time." Mr. Dawes says, "Mr. Stanton was too intense to make a good judge." [5] Again: "Prejudice sometimes led him to do injustice. Suspicion and uncharitableness were too often present blinding his eyes." [6]

Men who are timid are therefore usually retiring also; but Mr. Stanton, as we shall see, was one of the most timid of men, and yet eagerly fond of the center of the stage and the exercise

[5] *Atlantic*, LXXIII, 168.
[6] *Ibid.*, 169.

of power. General Grant, a man of calm and kindly disposition and disinclined to censure, says of him: "The Secretary was very timid. He could see our danger, not the enemy's." [7] General Grant presses the point further by adding wittily, "The enemy would not have been in danger if Mr. Stanton had been in the field."

Mr. Rhodes, who vies with Mr. Dawes and Mr. Thorpe in his admiration for Mr. Stanton, informs us that "when Richmond was occupied by Federal forces, Stanton was against allowing services in the Richmond churches unless accompanied with prayer for the President of the United States." [8] "Stanton was incapable of generosity to a fallen foe. . . . A petition was sent to Lincoln which he probably never saw. It was endorsed 'Disapproved, by order of the Secretary of War.' The churches were closed two Sundays in consequence. Stanton's impetuosity put him frequently in the wrong, but he could never bring himself to admit it. His overbearing desire when he had once taken a stand was to prevail. He gained an easy victory over the Richmond clergymen, but his persistence in the wrong was a different matter when he encountered a sturdy antagonist like Sherman. At times he chafed under the position of subordinate officer." [9] Mr. Rhodes shows conclusively, though with evident regret, Mr. Stanton's manipulation of the press to ruin General Sherman in reference to Johnston's surrender. Mr. Stanton's characteristic duplicity and effrontery were exhibited on the platform in Washington at the Grand Review just after the close of the War. He advanced smilingly, extending his hand to General Sherman, as if to a very dear friend. But the General refused to see either the smile or the hand. The injury done was too deadly to be so lightly ignored.

[7] Grant's *Memoirs*, II, 537.
[8] Rhodes, *History of the United States*, V, 179.
[9] *Ibid.*, 180, 181.

CHAPTER XI

STANTON'S TIMIDITY, AND LOVE OF POWER

As to his insatiable love of power, General Grant says: "Owing to his natural disposition to assume all power and control in all matters that he had anything to do with, he boldly took command of the army." [1]

This was after the war, when Grant was Lieutenant-general of the army.

"He prohibited any order from me going out of the Adjutant-General's office before he had approved it. He never disturbed himself, either, in examining my orders until it was entirely convenient for him. So the orders which I had prepared would often lie there three or four days before he sanctioned them." The General finally remonstrated and the Secretary apologized. "But he soon lapsed again and took control as before."

Referring to the Virginia Campaign, General Grant says: "I knew it was impossible for me to get orders through to Sheridan to make a movement because they would be stopped there, and such orders as Halleck's caution (and that of the Secretary of War) would suggest would be given instead, and would no doubt be contradictory to mine." [2]

Again, the General tells us: "Stanton cared nothing for the feelings of others. In fact it seemed to be pleasanter to him to disappoint than to gratify. He felt no hesitation in assuming the functions of the Executive or in acting without advising with him. If his action was not sustained, he would change it, if he saw the matter would be followed up until he did so." [3]

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[1] Grant, *Memoirs*, II, 105.
[2] *Ibid.*, 327.
[3] *Ibid.*, 536.

Mr. Ropes is more vehement in his censure: "Stanton was utterly ignorant of military matters; he despised from the bottom of his soul what is known as military science; making no secret of his general distrust of educated officers; rarely if ever lending an intelligent support to any general in the service. . . . Arrogant, impatient, irascible, Stanton was a terror and a marplot in the conduct of the war." [4]

It is interesting to note the value of a woman's intuition as revealed in a letter of General McClellan to his wife, dated July 13, 1861: "I ever will hereafter trust your judgment about men. . . . I remember what you thought of Stanton when you first saw him. I thought you were wrong. I now know you were right." [5]

To the weak, if they were obnoxious to him, he was rough to brutality. To a powerful enemy he was the Prince of Smoothness and Duplicity,—like a Borgia who presents the envenomed cup, with the smile of a friend, or like a bravo who creeps behind an enemy in the darkness and stabs him in the back.

Of his timidity his co-secretary, Mr. Gideon Welles, says: "He is by nature a sensationalist and has from the first been filled with panics and alarms in which I have not participated." [6] "Stanton has energy and application, is industrious and driving, but devises nothing, shuns responsibility, and I doubt his sincerity always. He wants no general to overtop him and is jealous of others in any position who have influence and popular regard; but he has cunning and skill, dissembles his feelings, and to a certain extent is brusque, and overvaliant in words.

"He is impulsive, not administrative; has quickness, often rashness, when he has nothing to apprehend; is more violent than vigorous; more demonstrative than discriminative; more vain than wise; is rude, arrogant, and domineering towards those in subordinate positions if they will submit to his rude-

[4] Ropes, *Story of the Civil War*, I, 225.
[5] McClellan, *Own Story*, 447.
[6] *Atlantic*, CIII, 362.

ness; but is a dissembler in deportment and language with those that he fears." Mr. Welles thought him "an unfit man in many respects for the War department. . . . Stanton is by nature an intriguer, courts favor, is not faithful in his friendships, and is given to secret, underhand combinations. His obligations to Seward are great, but would not deter him from raising a breeze against Seward to favor himself." [7]

"Stanton is actually hated by many officers; and is more intimate with certain extreme partisans in Congress, the committee on the Conduct of the War and others, than with the Executive, administration, and military men.[8] . . ." His relations with the President were privately conducted, as Mr. Welles might easily have observed. The latter again says: "Stanton does not attend one half of the Cabinet meetings. When he comes he communicates little of importance. Not infrequently he has a private conference with the President in the corner of the room." [9]

But it is Mr. Stanton's latest and most enthusiastic advocate who unwittingly supplies the greatest mass of evidence against him, while emphatically denying every adverse criticism of every nature.

From a perusal of the "Life of Edwin McMasters Stanton," by Mr. Frank Abial Flower, we may learn that Mr. Stanton was indeed, as Mr. Flower styles him on the title page, "The Autocrat of Rebellion, Emancipation, and Reconstruction." We may learn of his "cheek" in appearing in court as an attorney before he was twenty-one and without any license to practice law; [10] that he took unjust causes and made hard terms because thereof; [11] that he always carried a dagger seven inches long inside of his vest; [12] that he was very insolent to an attorney named Moodey, who at the next recess "flew at him like a panther," and thereby won his respect for life; [13]

[7] *Ibid.*, I, 203.
[8] *Ibid.*, I, 324.
[9] *Ibid.*, I, 546.
[10] Flower, *Life of Edwin McMasters Stanton*, 31.
[11] *Ibid.*, 37, 47, 52.
[12] *Ibid.*, 34.
[13] *Ibid.*, 48.

that he had no aptitude for accounts;[14] that after the inauguration of President Lincoln, Stanton held him and his administration in the utmost contempt,[15] in which view Mr. Flower cordially joins; that regardless of what a man of his intelligence must have noted,—namely, that the officers in the front rank of efficiency on both sides, like Grant, Sherman, Sheridan, Meade, Thomas, Lee, and Johnston, were all men of military education,—he had an inveterate prejudice against West Pointers;[16] that he pressed the President to exercise the functions of Commander in Chief, but only for six weeks, and then became himself the successor both of Lincoln and McClellan in supreme military authority;[17] that Stanton at the moment of his entry into office was hostile to McClellan,[18] and yet that four months later he wrote: "When I entered the cabinet I was and had been for months the sincere and devoted friend of General McClellan, and to support him and, so far as I might, aid and assist him in bringing the war to a close, was a chief inducement for me to sacrifice my personal happiness to a sense of public duty,"[19] that he did his best to usurp the functions of the Navy Department,[20] and indeed, as Mr. Flower with glowing admiration assures us, endeavored to make himself, and in effect was, the center of all authority, the possessor of all power, the Great Autocrat of the War; that he spurned the most common decencies of official intercourse, for if he wanted to confer with the Lieutenant-General of the Army he would send his colored messenger, saying, "Tell General Grant to come over here." He sent his clerk in the same way for Secretaries Chase, Seward, and others, and Mr. Flower seems delighted to record that, though they did not like it, "they always came." We learn from Mr. Flower that the list of the foremost men of the country who disliked him is very long and includes nearly all those who knew him best. All his co-secretaries Mr. Flower assures us "hated him,"[21] and a large part of his work is given to a defense

[14] Flower, *Life of Edwin McMasters Stanton*, 54.
[15] *Ibid.*, 105, 113.
[16] *Ibid.*, 358, 366.
[17] *Ibid.*, 138-141.
[18] *Ibid.*, 124, 125, 130, 131.
[19] *Ibid.*, 157.
[20] *Ibid.*, 154, 162-165.
[21] *Ibid.*, 424.

against the denunciations of such men as James G. Blaine, Generals Schofield, Gibbon, Badeau, McClellan, and Sherman, and against the highly adverse opinions found in General Grant's "Memoirs," to which we have already called attention.

In an able review of the *Diary of Gideon Welles,* in the New York *Times* of January 28, 1912, appear the following remarks:

"But Stanton, the snarling Stanton, is shown here in an unpitying light. As John T. Morse, Jr., who supplies the introduction, says, no man can regret the application of the lash to Stanton's back. We have all had our minds made up about him. Still, even to those who have felt most revolted by the bumptious and brutal War Secretary's assumption of superiority to Lincoln, even to those who have felt unable to forgive him his attitude toward the Union generals, good and bad, from McClellan to Sherman, a new light and a better reason for their opinion will come if they read Welles's pitiless day-by-day account of the foolish activities and the senseless brutalities and the crafty politics of this misnamed and overestimated 'Carnot.'"

We will have frequent occasion to illustrate Mr. Stanton's peculiar views and methods in the progress of our narrative.

CHAPTER XII

ALL QUIET ON THE POTOMAC

As all writers testify, the undertaking of creating an army commensurate with the work to be done proceeded with unexampled rapidity, and yet,—as its completion depended on the coming in of the necessary men and materials, a branch of activity which was not in his hands,—its impeded progress was vexatious to its commander. In October he writes to his wife, "This getting ready is slow work with such an administration." [1] "Preparations are slow." [2] On the 31st of October he alludes to "The gross neglect that has occurred in obtaining arms, clothing, etc." [3] In November he wrote: "I cannot move without more means, and I do not possess the power to control those means. I am doing all I can to move before winter sets in, but it now begins to look as if we were condemned to a winter of inactivity. If it is so, the fault will not be mine; there will be that consolation for my conscience, even if the world at large never knows it." [4] It is evident from these confidential messages to his wife that he was fretting under delay, which he thought could have been easily avoided if he had had control.

He was eager, and at first hopeful, that his plans could be sufficiently matured to enable him to take the field early in November. There was a strong desire that the enemy should be driven from his position at Manassas, where he had remained strongly intrenched and had been reported to be 100,000 strong.

McClellan was in a position similar to that of a contractor who is engaged to construct a building for the government suf-

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 167.
[2] *Ibid.*, 168.
[3] *Ibid.*, 172.
[4] *Ibid.*, 177.

ficiently large for a given purpose, upon plans made by himself, the materials for which are to be supplied by the government. The contractor, eager to complete the work, pushes it along as rapidly as possible, and fumes and worries because he is prevented from bringing it to an end by the slowness of the government in providing material; and yet, to his amazement, he finds a little later that the delay which so exasperated him is charged by the government entirely to himself.

The failure of the Government to hasten troops with sufficient diligence and speed into Washington left him still struggling with the colossal undertaking of creating an adequate army,—with the end not yet in sight when the heavy winter came on, as we have seen,—and barred the doors to an enterprise of such magnitude until the winter was over.

In an address to the officers of the army on January 20th, 1862, Mr. Stanton said, "It is my work to furnish the means, the instruments, for prosecuting the war for the Union and putting down the Rebellion against it." [5] It was a work that was long drawn out and inadequately accomplished long afterward.

As indicating the alleged lethargy of the new commander, Messrs. Nicolay and Hay [6] quote from Pollard's *First Yea. of the War,* as follows: "An inauspicious quiet for many months was maintained on the lines of the Potomac. A long, lingering Indian summer, with roads more hard and skies more beautiful than Virginia had seen for many a year, invited the enemy to advance." There is no doubt that the weather invited the Northerners to advance, and there is no doubt that Johnston would have been delighted to have them advance,—but to what? Probably that captivating quotation has convinced many thousands of readers that McClellan was derelict and lacking in energy, without a thought as to whether the Army of the Potomac was fit for the task either in numbers or in discipline. In fact, it was entirely inadequate in numbers. It was even more unfit in discipline, for the terror of Bull Run had not yet left it.

[5] Flower, *Life of Edwin McMasters Stanton,* 125.
[6] *Abraham Lincoln,* V, 176, n.

Speaking of encounters near the end of October, Mr. Eggleston tells us: "In the little engagements at Drainsville, the Yanks ran precipitately to cover. The Rebels thought they had no stability, no soldierly qualities whatever." [7] And a little earlier in his able work he admits that "McClellan's problem was to organize the army anew; to create it out of chaotic conditions—in the face of the difficulties which were thrown in his way by its experience in battle. He must give it morale." [8]

Obviously, that lovely Indian summer did not extend beyond the heavy snows of November the 25th, and the Army of the Potomac was then still in the midst of the throes of formation.

Mr. Elson notes, as we have said, that "when he took control of the Army of the Potomac it was a great disorganized mass, untrustworthy, discouraged, but possessing the one supreme virtue of patriotism. In four months McClellan had made of this crude mass, a tried, disciplined, organized army, equal to any that ever trod American soil." [9] But the Indian summer was then over. A little later the same author informs us that "at length McClellan decided that it would be unwise to undertake a winter campaign in the Virginia mud." [10]

In a communication to Mr. Stanton, dated February 3, 1862, the General notes "the unprecedented and impassable condition of the roads" [11] south of Manassas, and the swamps of the Warwick and the Chickahominy were surely no better. As to beginning operations before winter set in General McClellan tells us: "Even if the Army of the Potomac had been in condition to undertake a campaign in the Autumn of 1861, the backward state of affairs in the West would have made it unwise to do so; for on no sound military principle could it be regarded as proper to operate on one line alone while all was quiescent on the others, as such a course would

[7] *History of the Confederate War*, I, 247.
[8] *Ibid.*, 246.
[9] *History of the United States*, III, 691.
[10] *Ibid.*, 692.
[11] McClellan, *Own Story*, 233.

have enabled the enemy to concentrate everything on the one active army. Again, if, within a week or two of the first Bull Run, it had been possible to advance and defeat the Confederate army at Manassas, the moral effect might have justified the attempt, even were it impossible to follow up the victory; but after the lapse of some months it would have been foolish to advance unless prepared to follow up a victory and enter upon a campaign productive of definite results." [12]

[12] *Ibid.*, 200, 201.

CHAPTER XIII

FALSE CONSIDERATIONS—FOOLISH HASTE

The trouble with many in arriving at a just conclusion as to General McClellan's energy and capacity at a later time has arisen from irrelevant considerations, maliciously and cunningly introduced to confuse and obscure the view.

Whether a sculptor or painter or architect is doing certain work in his line with commendable diligence and artistic skill is not determined by the fact that the patron is standing by, complaining of his slowness and urging him to greater speed. It is irrational to bring such a circumstance into the consideration. It has no more bearing upon the industry of the workman or the excellence of his work than the claim that there are canals on Mars, or that the constellation of Orion is peopled by a branch of the Irish race.

When we think of the skill and activity with which McClellan organized the Army of the Potomac, the permanency and perfection of his work, and the universal and enthusiastic praise which he received, we are filled with admiration; but if we turn our backs on all this to inquire what number of the bystanders (press and people), without knowledge of conditions or capacity for judging, were clamorous for a battle, whether the Army was ready or not, and what number, with sounder wisdom, desired adequate numbers and thorough preparation and organization in order to lessen bloodshed and ensure success, we are at once lost in a fog of irrelevancy.

With writers honestly desirous of reaching the truth, the chief source of confusion and contention as to McClellan's military career has been a tendency to argue over non-vital matters, and the inevitable result as usual has been to lose sight of the real and only substantial issues, if there are any;

but I think it will be seen that when the irrelevant matters disappear, the controversies disappear with them.

The situation at the time of which we speak has been very aptly and forcibly expressed in a single sentence: "It may be said . . . that coming to Washington in midsummer, McClellan had done everything that could be reasonably expected of him in the few months before the season of bad roads set in, and that thereafter nothing could be undertaken with any chance of success until the roads had again become passable." [1]

"All quiet on the Potomac" became a byword; but not only on the Potomac was there quiet. We are told that "the armies everywhere remained inactive." [2] But only the Army of the Potomac was blamed for it. A very sensible course it was for the armies to pursue under such conditions; a course which every army pursues, or pays the penalty for not doing so, as was the case in Napoleon's Russian campaign.

It should not be lost sight of in passing that the victorious and usually very active Southern Army of Virginia was at this time also inactive. Inactivity in winter is a universal characteristic of armies, and that the Army of the Potomac possessed it was not a subject of reproach in any subsequent winter. General Michie devotes seventy-five pages of his subtle work to the "Inactivity of the Army of the Potomac." No one devotes seven lines to its inactivity during the winters which followed.

Was there any delay? Was General McClellan idling his time away? The evidence of friend and foe alike dispels such a thought. He came very near killing himself by the unresting diligence and vigor of his work. His most virulent critics admit that the swiftness of so splendid an achievement was marvelous. He built up the army, which all agree was the chief glory of the North. He should have been given a larger aggregate army than General Grant had later, for the Southern army was twice as large in the spring of 1862 as it was in the spring of 1864. In the Department of the Poto-

[1] *Dial*, XXXI, 319.
[2] *Battles and Leaders*, II, 436.

mac, General Grant had under his command a total of 310,000 men. If McClellan had been cordially supported in his eminently wise views of the necessities of the situation, he would have had at his command on May 1st, 1862, a larger army than he had asked for, completely and superbly equipped and thoroughly disciplined, in addition to as ample a force at Washington as the most timorous could desire. But in that phenomenal season even the beginning of May was far too early to set out, for the fiercest fighting of the Peninsula was done at the end of June, on flooded battlefields and in the midst of drenching rains. The powers of Heaven were not ready until July. What was the rush for? There was none the next year, nor the year following. Although those springs were much drier than was that of 1862, the first of May was thought early enough, and there was no clamor of the people. Why? Obviously because the National Press Agent, Mr. Stanton, did not start any in those years.

Mr. Ropes says, "McClellan was perfectly right in deferring operations until spring." [8] There was never any question in the three succeeding winters of the propriety of the Army of the Potomac remaining quiet in winter until the elements were favorable and there was no clamor of people or pressure from any quarter to conduct war under such hazardous circumstances.

General Grant is charged with ignoring the elements in his military operations, but all who have read his *Memoirs* know the contrary. He delayed the opening of his Virginia campaign until May the 4th because of the weather. After the passage of the Wilderness he halted for several days because of the weather. The finest and most lucid description of a battle ever written is found in *Les Miserables*. It is Hugo's account of Waterloo. Never was there such another illustration of the part which the elements play in war. He says:

"Had it not rained on the night of the 17th of June, 1815, the destiny of Europe would have been changed. . . . The battle of Waterloo could not be commenced before 11:30 o'clock. Why? Because the ground was too soft. It was

[8] *Story of the Civil War*, I, 261.

necessary to wait for it to acquire some firmness so that the artillery could maneuver. Had the ground been dry and the artillery able to move, the action would have begun at six o'clock in the morning. It was delayed five and a half hours and that gave Blücher time to come up."

The Army of the Potomac was not strong enough to move in January, 1862, as appears from the testimony of General Porter before the Committee on the Conduct of the War.[4]

But regardless of the state of preparation, and even if McClellan's desires had been fully carried out by the 20th of December, 1861, still the army should not have been sent out into the mud; and on that day, for a time, the typhus robbed the army of its commander. In 1863 and 1864, as we have said, the operations of the Army of the Potomac began about May the 1st, and the winters were much milder than was the first winter of the war. In 1862 they should not have begun at the earliest before the first or middle of June, as the heavy rains did not slacken until the second of July.

On the 2d of August, 1861, General McClellan had communicated to the Government his views as to the magnitude of the force which should be organized as an active army of invasion, putting it at 273,000, in addition to such forces as might be considered necessary to leave behind at Washington and in Northern Virginia. The wisdom and the feasibility of carrying out these views have been already discussed in Chapter VI.

About the middle of November the Administration brought a new factor into the situation. The desired army had not been collected. McClellan was eager to act. As we have seen, he was chafing to act before winter, but the means of action had not been given to him; the tools had not been furnished.

In a letter to his wife dated only "Nov.," written between November the 17th and November the 25th, 1861, he speaks of a letter to the Secretary of War, and adds: "The paper is a very important one, as it is intended to place on record that I have left nothing undone to make this army what it ought

[4] Gorham, *Life and Public Services of Edwin M. Stanton*, I, 236.

to be, and that the necessity for delay has not been my fault." [5]

From the communication spoken of we see that the Civil War officials were now, in spite of their own default in providing adequate numbers, urging upon the General that political considerations required an advance before winter closed in.

In view of this, and as an inducement to more vigorous action, he now names a lesser army to be completed and set in motion at once. But he might as well have adhered firmly to his first requisition, for the lethargic enlisting mill of the Government was not hurried in the least thereby, and the number he named merely to get swift action became fixed as the utmost he could ever get.

The main portion of his letter, after reminding the Secretary of the force he had recommended and deemed necessary, is as follows:

"So much time has passed and the winter is approaching so rapidly that but two courses are left to the Government: viz., either to go into winter quarters, or to assume the offensive with forces greatly inferior in numbers to the army I regarded as desirable and necessary. If political considerations render the first course unadvisable, the second alone remains. While I regret that it has not been deemed expedient, or perhaps possible, to concentrate the forces of the nation in this vicinity (remaining on the defensive elsewhere), keeping the attention and efforts of the Government fixed upon this as the vital point where the issue of the great contest is to be decided, it may still be that, by introducing unity of action and design among the various armies of the land, by determining the courses to be pursued by the various commanders under one general plan, transferring from the other armies the superfluous strength not required for the purpose in view, and thus re-enforcing this main army, whose destiny it is to decide the controversy, we may yet be able to move with a reasonable prospect before the winter is fairly upon us.

"The nation feels, and I share that feeling, that the Army of the Potomac holds the fate of the country in its hands.

[5] McClellan, *Own Story*, 176, 177.

The stake is so vast, the issue so momentous, and the effect of the next battle will be so important throughout the future as well as the present, that I continue to urge, as I have ever done since I entered upon the command of this army, upon the Government to devote its energies and its available resources toward increasing the numbers and efficiency of the army on which its salvation depends. . . .

"As you are aware, all the information we have from spies, prisoners, etc., agrees in showing that the enemy have a force on the Potomac not less than one hundred and fifty thousand strong, well drilled and equipped, ably commanded, and strongly intrenched. It is plain, therefore, that to insure success, or to render it reasonably certain, the active army should not number less than one hundred and fifty thousand efficient troops, with four hundred guns, unless some material change occurs in front of us.

"The requisite force for an advance movement by the Army of the Potomac may be thus estimated:

	Men	*Guns*
Column of active operations.....	150,000	400
Garrison of the city of Washington.....	35,000	40
To guard the Potomac to Harper's Ferry.....	5,000	12
To guard the lower Potomac.....	8,000	24
Garrison for Baltimore and Annapolis.....	10,000	12
Total effective force required.....	208,000	488

or an aggregate, present and absent, of about two hundred and forty thousand men, should the losses by sickness, etc., not rise to a higher percentage than at present.

"Having stated what I regard as the requisite force to enable this army to advance, I now proceed to give the actual strength of the Army of the Potomac. The aggregate strength of the Army of the Potomac, by the official report on the morning of the 27th instant, was one hundred and sixty-eight thousand three hundred and eighteen officers and men of all grades and arms. This includes the troops at Baltimore and Annapolis, on the upper and lower Potomac, the sick, absent, etc. The force present for duty was one hun-

dred and forty-seven thousand six hundred and ninety-five. Of this number forty-two hundred and sixty-eight cavalry were completely unarmed, thirty-one hundred and sixty-three cavalry only partially armed, fifty-nine hundred and seventy-nine infantry unequipped, making thirteen thousand four hundred and ten unfit for the field (irrespective of those not yet sufficiently drilled), and reducing the effective force to one hundred and thirty-four thousand two hundred and eighty-five, and the number disposable for an advance to seventy-six thousand two hundred and eighty-five. The infantry regiments are, to a considerable extent, armed with unserviceable weapons. Quite a large number of good arms, which had been intended for this army, were ordered elsewhere, leaving the Army of the Potomac insufficiently and in some cases badly armed. On the 30th of September there were with this army two hundred and twenty-eight field guns ready for the field. So far as arms and equipments are concerned, some of the batteries are still quite raw and unfit to go into action. I have intelligence that eight New York batteries are en route hither; two others are ready for the field. I will still (if the New York batteries have six guns each) be one hundred and twelve guns short of the number required for the active column, saying nothing for the present of those necessary for the garrisons and corps on the Potomac, which would make a total deficiency of two hundred guns.

"I have thus briefly stated our present condition and wants. It remains to suggest the means of supplying the deficiencies:

"First. That all the cavalry and infantry arms, as fast as procured, whether manufactured in this country or purchased abroad, be sent to this army until it is fully prepared for the field.

"Second. That the two companies of the Fourth Artillery, now understood to be en route from Fort Randall to Fort Monroe, be ordered to this army, to be mounted at once; also that the companies of the Third Artillery, en route from California, be sent here. Had not the order for Smead's battery to come here from Harrisburg to replace the battery

I gave General Sherman been so often countermanded, I would again ask for it.

"Third. That a more effective regulation may be made authorizing the transfer of men from the volunteers to the regular batteries, infantry, and cavalry, that we may make the best possible use of the invaluable regular 'skeletons.'

"Fourth. I have no official information as to the United States forces elsewhere, but from the best information I can obtain from the War Department and other sources I am led to believe that the United States troops are:

In Western Virginia about	30,000
In Kentucky	40,000
In Missouri	80,000
In Fortress Monroe	11,000
Total	161,000

"Besides these, I am informed that more than one hundred thousand are in progress of organization in other Northern and Western States.

"I would therefore recommend that, not interfering with Kentucky, there should be retained in Western Virginia and Missouri a sufficient force for defensive purposes, and that the surplus troops be sent to the Army of the Potomac to enable it to assume the offensive; that the same course be pursued in respect to Fortress Monroe, and that no further outside expeditions be attempted until we have fought the great battle in front of us.

"Fifth. That every nerve be strained to hasten the enrollment, organization, and armament of new batteries and regiments of infantry.

"Sixth. That all the battalions now raised for new regiments of regular infantry be at once ordered to this army, and that the old infantry and cavalry en route from California be ordered to this army immediately on their arrival in New York.

"I have thus indicated in a general manner the objects to be accomplished and the means by which we may gain our ends. A vigorous employment of these means will, in my

opinion, enable the Army of the Potomac to assume successfully this season the offensive operations which, ever since entering upon the command, it has been my anxious desire and diligent effort to prepare to prosecute. The advance should not be postponed beyond the 25th of November, if possible to avoid it.

"Unity in councils, the utmost vigor and energy in action, are indispensable. The entire military field should be grasped as a whole and not in detached parts. One plan should be agreed upon and pursued; a single will should direct and carry out these plans.

"The great object to be accomplished, the crushing defeat of the rebel army now at Manassas, should never for one instant be lost sight of, but all the intellect and means and men of the Government poured upon that point. The loyal states possess ample force to effect all this and more. The rebels have displayed energy, unanimity, and wisdom worthy of the most desperate days of the French Revolution. Should we do less?

"The unity of this nation, the preservation of our institutions, are so dear to me that I have willingly sacrificed my private happiness with the single object of doing my duty to my country. When the task is accomplished I shall be glad to return to the obscurity from which events have drawn me. Whatever the determination of the Government may be, I will do the best I can with the Army of the Potomac, and will share its fate, whatever may be the task imposed upon me.

"Permit me to add on this occasion, as heretofore, it has been my aim neither to exaggerate nor underrate the power of the enemy, nor fail to express clearly the means by which, in my judgment, that power may be broken.

"Urging the energy of preparation and action, which has ever been my choice, but with the fixed purpose by no act of mine to expose the Government to hazard by premature movement, and requesting that this communication may be laid before the President, I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant." [6]

[6] *Official Record*, V, 9.

It will be noted that the number,—150,000 men,—was to be of effectives. It did not include teamsters and other non-combatants, and then too this number was assented to by the commander only in case the army was to assume the offensive before winter. If the army had gone into winter quarters, there was no reason for reducing the number originally suggested. He points out the total effective number at Baltimore, Annapolis, on the Potomac, and at Washington as 134,285, and those available for an advance as 76,285. The letter shows that he had only half the lessened number of men and half the lessened number of guns now named by him. According to the best information obtainable, the Southern Army of Virginia numbered at this time 150,000 men in the Old Dominion.

The Government, as appears in Chapter VI, had not before the severe winter set in or up to January 1, 1862, secured even two-thirds of the reduced force now suggested.

It is a very weak point in our system of government that the man who, because of his military capacity, is placed at the head of the army has no control over the enlistment of men or over their disposition when enlisted.

A man like General McClellan or General Grant would surely know best how many men were needed and where they could be of the greatest use, but this power is vested entirely in the hands of the Secretary of War, and during the Civil War this official was, and usually is, a civilian entirely ignorant of military science.

On January 20th, 1862, as already stated, in the address to the officers of the army Mr. Stanton said, "It is my work to furnish the means, the instruments, for prosecuting the war for the Union and putting down the rebellion against it."

So with the gathering of the army McClellan had nothing to do. The plan of government committed that vitally important function to other hands. He was there to transform the newly arrived men into soldiers as rapidly as possible, but the assembling of the new recruits rested entirely with the War Department. As Mr. Stanton had said, it was his work to furnish the means; and such effective steps should have been taken as would have secured the presence in Washington of the

whole force originally required by October 1st. This was readily feasible, but it was not done. The new levies were brought in with a slowness which must have been maddening to a man of McClellan's energy and executive ability, and this was the reason why the army was not ready to move before winter.

The army of invasion which McClellan had proposed, 300,000 men,[7] was, as has been pointed out, none too large to ensure success.

On December 1st the total force at Washington was 136,852. Deducting from these figures the force retained by the War Department when McClellan set out, practically nothing was left for offensive operations at that date.

The Administration was therefore manifestly derelict and culpable in its lack of energy in carrying out the plans of the general in chief, for not only were the required troops and material not rushed into Washington at once, but even on March 15th, 1862, there was only one-third of the originally suggested and necessary force available for an advance. General Whittier in his forceful essay on the Peninsular Campaign writes: "McClellan, recognizing as he did the earnestness of the South and the duel to the death which must follow, could not yield at once to the wicked and ignorant clamor, which soon succeeded in wrecking his plans, appointing his subordinates against his views and wishes, and eventually taking charge of the war in Virginia." [8]

[7] McClellan, *Own Story*, 107.
[8] *Historical Society of Massachusetts*, I, 224, 225.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PLAN OF CAMPAIGN

Now came to the surface the first serious menace of a total overthrow of McClellan's scheme of invasion in the shape of a communication from the President, which meant that,—regardless of snows; regardless of inadequacy of numbers; regardless of the fact that more than half of the Army of the Potomac was still insufficiently drilled, instructed, and disciplined, and regardless of its incomplete equipment,—the administration contemplated driving it forth, at once, to give battle to the enemy.

This impulsive resolution was needless and irrational, for as Mr. Headley points out, though congress was getting restive, the feeling was not one of insistence that the army should go forth in the depth of winter,—for the impassable condition of the roads, it seemed to be admitted on all hands, rendered a winter campaign out of the question,—"but one of discontent that no forward movement had been made before they became so," a course which, in the army's state of unreadiness, would probably have ensured another Bull Run.[1]

It is from the same author that we learn that probably a day or two after Congress met on December 1st, 1861, Mr. Lincoln urged an immediate movement of the army and gave General McClellan a memorandum of his plan, with queries and blanks for answers. The General, after keeping the paper for ten days, filled in the blanks in pencil and returned the memorandum to the President. It began: "If it were determined to make a forward movement of the Army of the Potomac without awaiting further increase of numbers or better drilling or discipline, how long would it require to actually get in motion?" [2]

[1] *The Great Rebellion*, I, 229.
[2] *Official Record*, XI, 3, 6, 7.

This indicates that the President, doubtless under pressure, thought of forcing the army out at once, ignoring the season, the insufficient numbers, and the general state of unreadiness. The total troops on the roll (not all effectives or fighters), it seems, then amounted to about 104,000.

On this memorandum the General in Chief wrote: "Information received recently leads me to believe that the enemy could meet us in front with equal forces nearly, and I have now my mind actively turned toward another plan of campaign, that I do not think is at all anticipated by the enemy nor by many of our own people."

This was the first intimation to the Government of what has since been known as "the coast route."

That the General had thought of it earlier appears from this passage in his letter of October 6th, 1861, to Mrs. McClellan: *"I do not expect to fight a battle near Washington. . . .* So soon as I feel that my army is *well organized and well disciplined, and strong enough,* I will advance and force the rebels to a battle *in a field of my own selection.* A long time must yet elapse before I can do this, and I expect all the papers will abuse me for delay; but I will not mind that." [8]

Upon this news of a new plan of campaign further action was for the time suspended by the Administration, but the germ of the notion of disregarding suitable preparation, adequacy of force, and progress of equipment grew and strengthened until it destroyed all McClellan's calculations and utterly blocked his path. From the almost criminal determination of pushing him forth so handicapped in the particulars mentioned as to court disaster it was an easy step to a recklessness which thwarted every plan.

The great importance of this incident seems to be generally overlooked. This was the turning point in the career of General McClellan. Here it was that Fortune deserted her favorite, for the idea conveyed in Mr. Lincoln's words, "If it were determined to make a forward movement without awaiting, etc.," bore to the commander the official death knell of all his hopes and plans and calculations, and presented to him at best

[8] McClellan, *Own Story,* 168.

the prospect of an extremely hazardous venture in the place of an assured success.

It seems possible that he might have escaped this imminent peril but for his own oncoming illness and the appearance of Mr. Stanton upon the scene.

Early in the winter McClellan was stricken with typhoid fever. Stanton succeeded Cameron as Secretary of War, and the attitude of the department changed from one of cordial support to one of hostility to the army commander. "The Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War, of which Wade and Chandler were the leading spirits,—a committee whose star chamber proceedings, indictments, one-sided trials, and convictions of prominent officers it is difficult to condemn in terms of moderation,—was aggressively hostile to McClellan. The pressure of the politicians was for an immediate advance of the army, fit or unfit; and during the period of McClellan's illness in the early winter, the President by consultation with several of McClellan's subordinates, in the presence of cabinet officers, tried to formulate by committee a plan of campaign at a season of the year which would have doomed any overland campaign to failure." [4] We have already learned that the guiding spirit was Mr. Stanton.

General McClellan intended that all the military and naval forces of the Union should assume the offensive in the spring of 1862 simultaneously, so that the troops of the South would be needed at every contested point at the same moment, and therefore could not be withdrawn from one point to strengthen another.

As for his immediate command, his first thought while rushing along the creation of an army was naturally nothing else, as the initial movement of offensive warfare, but to strike the rebels at Manassas. Further consideration, as we have noted, brought to his mind a better plan, more worthy of his strategic genius; and this plan it is evident he had no thought of revealing. He was not urged or even requested to reveal it at any time in 1861 by Mr. Cameron, the Secretary of War, or by Mr. Lincoln.

[4] *Dial*, XXXI, 319.

CHAPTER XV

FEVER AIDS THE ENEMY—ENTER STANTON

Typhus was a potent factor in the affairs of the general in chief, especially when the peril of death seemed great.

The President, up to the time of General McClellan's prostration, had almost daily consultations with him, and was fond of talking with him and telling him stories. Not infrequently he would call in the evening and stay until midnight. The greater part of this time was wasted as far as practical business was concerned, for the general features of the progress of the work of organization could be told very quickly; and those who knew him best and loved him most and, we may add, whom he loved most assure us that Mr. Lincoln had no mind for detail; that was altogether outside of his realm of usefulness. So the President did not realize fully, if at all, how absorbing and exhausting must be the labors of a man who had a genius for details and who gave conscientious, thoughtful, and unsparing attention to them.

What the General's life was we may learn from his letters. During August he writes: "I do not live at all: merely exist, worked and worried half to death. I have no privacy, no leisure, no relaxation, except in reading your letters and writing to you.[1] . . . It is often ten o'clock when I get back from my ride, and I have nothing to eat all day. . . . Twelve hours in saddle. . . . I have had a busy day; started from here at seven in the morning, and was in the saddle until nine this evening. . . . On Sunday, instead of going to church, was sent for by the President immediately after breakfast, and kept busy until midnight when I returned from a long ride too tired to talk even." These extracts prove how pressingly occupied he was and how trying to his pa-

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 84, 85, 89.

tience under such conditions were such wasteful encroachments upon his time. They also enable us to understand his reference to "browsing Presidents," to which a hostile critic gives undue importance and with highly questionable fairness omits what immediately follows. In November Mr. McClellan writes: "I have been at work all day nearly, on a letter to the Secretary of War [Cameron] in regard to future military operations. I have not been at home for three hours but am concealed at Stanton's to dodge all enemies in the shape of 'browsing' Presidents, etc. 1. A. M. I am pretty thoroughly tired out. The paper is a very important one, as it is intended to place on record that I have left nothing undone to make this army what it ought to be, and that the necessity for delay has not been my fault." On the very same page we find, "The President is honest and means well," and this passage displays his friendly feeling toward Mr. Lincoln.

If his illness had been any affliction which would have permitted him to continue to cheer the sorely troubled President, all might have been well; but typhoid fever, so severe that in a few days his life was threatened, in effect almost removed him from the earth, so far as Mr. Lincoln's needs were concerned, and this removal for a time seemed certain to be permanent. The army had lost its chief; the President, his military adviser.

On January 10th, three weeks after McClellan was stricken down and while he was still seriously ill, the President called on him and learned that the General was unable to see him,[2] whereupon Lincoln was grievously disappointed and somewhat chagrined and hurt, as we are gravely told, that McClellan did not ask for him and that he was not admitted. Apparently he did not realize that the sick General probably knew nothing of his call and that a faithful nurse thinks only of her patient. As the result of this wholly imaginary rebuff, on that very night the President called Generals McDowell and Franklin into consultation, told them of his failure to see McClellan, and added that, as he must talk with some one, he had sent for them to obtain their opinion as to the possi-

[2] Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, V, 156.

bility of soon commencing active operations with the Army of the Potomac.[3] How ridiculous such feverish and most unwise haste would have seemed in the first half of January of any later year of the war! General McClellan thus explains the President's inability to see him on that and other occasions: "As is often the case with such diseases, I sometimes passed days and nights without sleeping, and it more than once happened that the President called while I was asleep, after such intervals of wakefulness, and being denied admittance, his anxiety induced him to think that my disease was very acute and would terminate fatally." [4]

The facts, however, seem to indicate pique and resentment rather than anxiety about the General's recovery, as evidenced by the remark of the President at the meeting just mentioned that "If General McClellan did not want to use the army, he would like to borrow it." In view of the helpless condition of the commander, this observation was most inconsiderate and irrational, and every admirer of Mr. Lincoln must wonder that it was made.

It is to be regretted that Mr. Welles's diary for this period has not been published. His published diary begins with July 13th, 1862. His candid revelations would surely have thrown great light upon the particular point of time which we are now considering. And that such a diary exists appears from the statement that he kept one throughout his life. No part of the war was so important nor so teeming with intrigue and crafty machinations. There is no period of the war so productive of far-reaching events as the month intervening between the 20th of December, 1861, and the 20th of January, 1862, and none as to which there is so distressing a silence as to the affairs of the Army of the Potomac. Even the marvelously diligent and exhaustive searcher Mr. Rhodes fails us here. He does not seem to be aware of what Mr. Chase's diary shows,[5]—namely, that Seward and Chase maneuvered

[3] Swinton, *Army of the Potomac*, 80; Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, V, 156.

[4] McClellan, *Own Story*, 155.

[5] Worden's *Chase*, 400.

to secure Stanton's appointment as Secretary of War,—and merely says, "The appointment was acceptable to Seward and Chase." This is hardly a correct rendering of the activities of these gentlemen as recorded by one of them. Mr. Chase gives the particulars of how they contrived, with the aid of Mr. Cameron, the retiring secretary, to accomplish the object of their wishes. It seems like drollery to say in effect that their own success was acceptable to them, as if they were in no wise instrumental in the selection of the new secretary. But Mr. Flower shows us how Mr. Cameron's tenure of office was brought to an end by the craftiness of Mr. Stanton, who opened the way for himself [6] by a paragraph which he suggested and added to Mr. Cameron's annual report, recommending the arming of slaves,—a matter concerning which Mr. Lincoln's mind had not yet been made up. From their industry in this matter, from the proceedings of the meeting of January 12th, 1862, to be set forth a little later, and from their united persistent efforts thereafter,—which Mr. Welles, their co-secretary, dubs a conspiracy, not merely to oust McClellan, but with astonishing malice, hard to understand other than as due to Stanton's deluding slanders and manipulations of all sources of adverse influence, to destroy the character of this singularly excellent and upright man and utterly ruin him,—from all this no doubt is left that shortly after McClellan's collapse a thorough understanding and a harmonious plan of action had been arrived at between Seward, Chase, and Stanton, embracing the management of the War Department and the conduct of the war generally. I would have been inclined to think that the new triumvirate was at first willing to tolerate McClellan, were it not for their adverse attitude, especially of Chase and Stanton at all times after the 13th of January, 1862, and the positive statement of Mr. Chase that "Stanton was determined to get rid of McClellan," which design Mr. Chase indicates no intention of opposing.

Mr. Stanton's biographer, Mr. Gorham, thinks that McClellan's "stubborn resistance to the administration's plan of campaign first estranged the Secretary from him," but that

[6] Flower, *Edwin McMasters Stanton*, 116, 117.

view does not quite coincide with Mr. Chase's statement, for Mr. Chase is speaking of a time which antedated any struggle over the plan of campaign.

My own view, like that of Mr. Gorham, is that McClellan's reticence as to his plans meant to Stanton an unfettered control of military operations which, though not quite treason, was just as intolerable to the autocratic head of the War Department.

The surrounding facts and ensuing events dissipate all doubt that from the moment of his induction into office on the 20th of January, 1862, and forever afterward the real attitude of Mr. Stanton toward General McClellan was one of envenomed enmity and relentless hostility; yet, with astonishing wiliness and duplicity, his outward personal attitude toward him almost to the very end, as we shall show by his own letters, was that of a warm, admiring, and devoted friend. "It was not long after Mr. Stanton had entered upon the duties of his office before McClellan found that the atmosphere of the War Department had measurably lowered in temperature so far as he was concerned. Instead of the confidential and appreciative reception to which he had been accustomed, he was soon made to feel the chilling and repelling attitude of official superiority. . . .

"Unable to understand the cause of McClellan's inactivity, he [Stanton] soon became an active ally of the Committee on the Conduct of the War to remedy this state of affairs. Actuated by this antagonism, he opposed, though not always openly, McClellan's plan of campaign, and sometimes indulged in contemptuous expressions reflecting upon the latter's military ability and purposes." [7]

As we have seen, Mr. Stanton was more than an ally of the Committee on the Conduct of the War. He was one of its creators. He never openly opposed McClellan's plan, and despite his actual deadly hatred he professed, with most earnest assurances, to be a cordial friend and supporter of General McClellan as late as September, 1862.

[7] Michie, *General McClellan*, 167, 168.

CHAPTER XVI

PRESSURE UPON M'CLELLAN—NEED OF SECRECY—THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF

On the 12th of January McClellan was well enough to be driven to the White House, where he had a conference with the President. This was in consequence of information conveyed to him by Stanton. The President, before McClellan left, invited him to attend a meeting there on the following day. Messrs. Lincoln, Seward, Chase, and Blair and Generals McDowell, Franklin, and Meigs were present. After some whispering apart between the President and Mr. Chase, the latter "spoke aloud in a very excited tone and manner, saying that he understood the purpose of the meeting to be that General McClellan should then and there explain his military plans in detail, that they might be submitted to the approval or disapproval of the gentlemen present." [1]

McClellan declined to divulge his plans, and the meeting adjourned.

The imperative need of secrecy as to military operations, under the conditions existing in Washington at that time, must be obvious to any unbiased mind.

Lord Wolseley, the famous English general, who was then a young man and with the Confederates as an observer, expresses his views on this subject very positively: "McClellan was right not to reveal his plan to the Cabinet. Everything leaked out. I was in Richmond in the Autumn of 1862 and know." [2] Colonel Powell is of the opinion that "from a military standpoint it is evident that General McClellan might with advantage to the service have been even more reticent than he was." [3] "The large number of Confederate spies in

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 156, 157.
[2] *North American Review*, CXLIX, 38.
[3] *History of the Fifth Army Corps*, I, 33, n.

Washington compelled McClellan to keep his plans secret." [4] "The Cabinet believed in debate in council, every member's opinion being equally good, while McClellan held his tongue, which in the then state of feeling in Washington was more than usually a military necessity." "Johnston, thanks to his excellent Intelligence Department in Washington, knew all about the Army of the Potomac." [5] "Secrecy was not one of our virtues. The newspapers were able to publish all our prospective movements with scandalous accuracy; and what these were unable to learn, secession sympathizers at the capital appeared constantly to unearth for the benefit of their Southern friends." [6]

Other authorities, proving the actual benefit which resulted from McClellan's reticence and the evil which followed at once when he was finally forced to reveal his plans, will be given at the appropriate place.

The paramount feature of Mr. Stanton's character was, as we have shown, his love of supreme authority, of absolute dominion, and he evidently formed an astute plan to gratify this longing before he became Secretary of War. It was this: to point out to the President that the Constitution made him the Commander in Chief of the armies and navies of the Union and that it was his sworn duty, under his oath of office, to assume the functions of this office and direct the operations of all the forces of the nation. Mr. Stanton no doubt confidently and sagaciously hoped that before long the President, pressed with other cares, would find this added burden much too heavy and that the supreme military authority would then naturally devolve upon himself; and so it happened.

He measured the President accurately, and in this seductive incitation he was ministering to the boundless ambition of which Mr. Herndon advises us.

The Comte de Paris records that "Stanton was instrumental more than anyone else in developing in Mr. Lincoln's mind the idea of directing military operations from the depths of

[4] Wood and Edmunds, *History of the Civil War*, 48.
[5] Formby, *American Civil War*, 106.
[6] General Dodge, *Bird's-Eye View of the Civil War*, 50, 51.

the White House." [7] "Stanton undoubtedly expected to bring about a radical change in the military situation, partly by inducing the President to exercise his authority as McClellan's military superior." [8] "He soon found that McClellan was as stubborn against his persuasions as he had been against those of Mr. Lincoln." [9] This means through the agency of the President, for Stanton never urged McClellan directly. He always worked underground. "The law made even generals military subordinates of the President. His instincts compelled Stanton so to think." [10] Stanton "constantly reminded the President that he was the Commander in Chief, and could not divest himself of this authority." [11]

His mode of persuasion was certainly unique, for while all writers of note now recognize that he was tirelessly working against McClellan's plan, it nowhere appears that he ever wrote or spoke to McClellan about the coast route or any other route. Messrs. Nicolay and Hay tell us that "Stanton began as soon as he took charge of his department to ply the commander of the army with continual incitements to activity." [12] The reader will look in vain in Gorham's book or in Flower's or in McClellan's *Own Story,* or elsewhere, for any word of this nature from Stanton to McClellan. Stanton's hand was always hidden.

The army continued to grow in numbers, though not rapidly, until on March 15th, 1862, McClellan had a total of 203,213, which, as he calculated, would give him for active operations a force of 146,000, to which 10,000 were to be added from Fort Monroe.

From his inauguration to the close of 1861, and until the installation of Mr. Stanton on the 20th of January, the President had exercised no function of a commander. Then came a swift transformation. His "War Order No. 1" is dated

[7] *Battles and Leaders,* II, 120.
[8] Gorham, *Life and Public Services of Edwin M. Stanton,* I, 332.
[9] *Ibid.,* 333.
[10] *Ibid.,* 334.
[11] Formby, *American Civil War,* 105; Flower, *Life and Public Services of Edwin M. Stanton,* 138.
[12] *Abraham Lincoln,* V, 159.

January 27, 1862, just one week after Mr. Stanton took office. This order was not given to the public until March 11th.[13] It "was Mr. Lincoln's first exercise of his authority as Commander in Chief," and was inspired by Mr. Stanton.[14]

The order directed a general movement of the land and sea forces of the United States. This was followed by Special War Order No. 1, directing an advance of the Army of the Potomac on Manassas. This special order was but a corollary of the general one and so undoubtedly emanated like it from the Secretary of War. It was a Machiavellian method to force McClellan to reveal his plan, and swiftly met with the success which the astute war secretary anticipated from it.

[13] *Battles and Leaders*, II, 120.

[14] Gorham, *Life and Public Services of Edwin M. Stanton*, I, 333, 334.

CHAPTER XVII

M'CLELLAN REVEALS HIS PLAN

General McClellan lost no time in seeing the President and asking permission to submit his views.[1] This was given, and on February 3d, 1862, the General in Chief sent to the Secretary of War a full explanation of his own plan of action as well as his objections to the contemplated advance on Manassas, urging with great force and apt argument the superior advantages of his own designs for offensive operation and the dangers of the overland route.

As we have seen, General McClellan felt that it was the course of wisdom and economy for the Government to employ its vast resources in raising an overwhelming force at once and trampling out all opposition swiftly, and he suggested 300,000 men for the operations in Virginia, and this great host was smaller in proportion than was afterward employed; but it is clear from his letter of February 3d that he recognized that he was in the hands of enemies; that his splendid plan, which rested above all in adequacy of numbers, was hopelessly frustrated; that the Administration had not gathered the necessary forces as it could easily have done and was now charging him with the result of its own delay and inactivity, and, although it was in the midst of a phenomenally inclement winter, was determined to push the army out without waiting for numbers, equipment, discipline, or suitable weather. He saw that he must do the best he could with what he then had, and in whatever condition his army might be, or relinquish a leadership for which he knew he was fitted by nature, by study, and by experience. In this letter, then, we find him resigned to the inevitable and pointing out what could be done with the forces at hand without waiting for more;

[1] Swinton, *Army of the Potomac*, 87.

instead of having the 300,000 men he desired, he was now basing his plans on about half that number. But it must never be lost sight of that when a commander advises that an invading force of 300,000 is necessary and the administration, though having the power to supply the required number, compels him to advance with half the force or less, then, if the army proves inadequate in strength, the responsibility for unsatisfactory results rests with the Administration and not with the commander.

General McClellan's plans were frustrated in a vital particular; his generalship was severely handicapped by the failure to supply him with anything more than a moiety of the force he considered necessary, and which the after history of the Army of the Potomac demonstrated was in fact necessary for the subjugation of Virginia even when her army was much smaller, her energy far spent, and her resources almost exhausted. We are told that "the President was by no means convinced by General McClellan's reasoning; but in consequence of a steady resistance and unwillingness to enter upon the execution of any other plan, he assented." [2]

Mr. Lincoln thereupon rescinded the order for a movement upon Manassas, and on February 27th, 1862, the War Department ordered the necessary transports to convey the army to the Peninsula.

The reader may not at once discern the greatest significance of the first two war orders. The orders were surely bad enough in evincing a reckless resolution to push the army out, regardless of its inadequacy of strength and preparation, but that was not their worst significance. The most ominous feature to the General in Chief was their evidence of personal hostility to him, for they were issued without his having been consulted and even without his having been given a warning. This was a gross discourtesy,—one which no admirer of Mr. Lincoln can justly approve. The signing of the orders meant Stanton's implacable hostility, of which it was the first overt act. These orders were in form and manner of issuance positive commands from a commander to a subaltern whose

[2] Raymond, *History of the Administration of President Lincoln*, 225.

only concern was to obey. They put the general in chief of the army upon the level of a corporal. He was simply to carry out orders. His military education and experience, his military genius, went for nothing.

McClellan knew, and it must be presumed that Mr. Stanton knew, that the execution of the orders would be suicidal to the Union cause; but we should be indulgent enough to hope that they were only diplomatically, not seriously, made, and that the object was to discover McClellan's plan of action.

The Administration's plan,—or rather, Mr. Stanton's plan, for until his advent the Administration had no plan,—was one born of timidity and fearfulness. It was a plan of hares, not of valiant men. Its one dominant idea was "to keep a great army between Washington and the enemy." From what General Grant and Secretary Welles tell us of Mr. Stanton we would expect this of him; but what astonishes and humiliates us is that not a single brave voice among the civilians in power was raised in patriotic indignation to denounce this attitude as shameless cowardice, unworthy of Americans, or to appeal to their manhood, seeking to enkindle the flame of courage in this city of Timid Hearts by pointing to the example of the Romans with Hannibal at the gate or to other instances supplied by the spirit of the ancients under more trying circumstances. It is not an inspiring chapter of our history.

"Seek the enemy where he is and crush him" was the cry. This practically meant to let the enemy select the most favorable position, behind strong entrenchments, aided by every artifice and advantage known to military science, and attack him there. This method of advancing to the Confederate capital came to be known as the "overland route."

In view of the persistent policy of the Administration to keep a large army between the rebels and their "divinities," as Hotspur would say, the following letter from the President to General Grant, dated August 3, 1864, is of interest: "I have seen your dispatch in which you say, 'I want Sheridan put in command of all the troops in the field, with instructions to put himself south of the enemy and follow him to

the death.' . . . This I think is exactly right as to how our forces should move. But please look over the dispatches you have received from here, even since you made that order, and discover, if you can, that there is any idea in the head of any one here of 'putting our army *South* of the enemy' or of 'following him to the death' in any direction. I repeat to you, it will never be done nor attempted unless you watch it every day, and hour, and force it." [8]

The attentive reader will see that in this letter the President of the United States, the commander in chief of the Army, is in the attitude of a mere spectator, who, observing what the War Department is doing, recognizes its weakness and timidity and, accordingly, as a good citizen, exhorts the general to guard against it. No evidence could better illustrate the "government by department" of which Mr. Welles writes than this letter. It is as if the President had at this time nothing to do with the War Department, no voice in its management, no control over its conduct of public affairs.

It must be noted that, though General Grant yielded so far as to take the overland route, he did not "seek the enemy," but selected his own way, marching not due south toward Orange where Lee was but almost due east toward Fredericksburg, thus forcing the enemy to abandon its redoubts to intercept him.

If there had been any basis for the silly notion that the Confederates would gladly exchange Richmond for Washington, General Lee would have permitted General Grant to pass on, and he would then have swooped down upon the National capital with an irresistible force. He would surely have captured it, for it was then much more weakly garrisoned than in the spring of 1862. Evidently no such thought ever came into the minds of any of the Southern leaders. The blood which they shed and the fearful price which it cost General Grant to draw near to the Southern capital should settle that point forever. However, any one who has the slightest appreciation or understanding of Southern character would need no proof of this.

[8] Grant, *Memoirs*, II, 318.

The plan of General McClellan was to force the enemy to meet him in a field of his own selection and to get as close to Richmond as possible without firing a shot, without losing a man. He foresaw what was so terribly proven afterward in long years of bloodshed: that the adoption of the overland route would needlessly drench the soil of Virginia, every foot of the way from Manassas to Richmond, with the blood of the bravest sons of the North and of the South.

McClellan's plan was "to carry the war into Africa,"—to strike at once at the very heart of the Confederacy and to strike with such crushing force as permanently to end resistance.

When Hannibal with his triumphant army was sorely pressing the Romans in their capital that plucky people slipped off an army under Scipio into Africa, and the natural and immediate result was that Hannibal was at once recalled, and recalled in vain, for he was overthrown on the plains of Zama; and this Roman victory brought the first Punic War to a close.

The history of the Boer War illustrates both plans. First, the Administration plan: the English sought the Boer armies, and so had to fight them on fields where there was not a shadow of a chance for victory. As the result, the stockades of Johannesburg were crowded with captives; the crack Scotch and Irish fighters of the British army were there as prisoners, and South Africa was said to be "the grave of reputations" of British generals. Second, the plan of "Carrying the war into Africa": for then at last came Roberts and Kitchener, and Africa was no longer the grave of reputations. Their South African campaign only gave increased lustre to the renown of these already famous soldiers. They did not seek the Boers in the great natural fortresses of the mountains where they had insuperable advantages in their favor. They selected their own ground and struck straight at Pretoria and Johannesburg; and what they foresaw must inevitably happen in reality did happen. The Boers rushed from their coigns of vantage to defend their cities, and like Hannibal rushed in vain, as we all know.

Over-eager to defend the Administration, a few writers have espoused the overland route, but its folly is now beyond serious contention.

The weight of authority is overwhelmingly against it and in favor of McClellan's plan of operations. Mr. Eggleston, the Southern historian, the most recent authority on the war, echoes the universal Southern view: "McClellan seems to have had no thought of making his way to Richmond by the route of Centreville and Manassas, where Johnston lay behind impregnable fortifications. He knew the easiest way of approach was up the James River from Fort Monroe as a base of operations." [4] But of course the very best witness of all must obviously be the general whom Stanton wished McClellan to attack. "I did not doubt that this route [the coast route] would be taken by General McClellan as it would be most difficult to meet." [5] Lord Wolseley thought the coast route best,[6] and says: "Lincoln was wrong in believing that the one way to get at Richmond was by making straight there from Washington." [7] General Dodge expresses the same view, then adds: "Grant had in theory favored the coast route. The overland route he deemed too costly in time and men." [8] Mr. Ropes is against the overland route.[9] Swinton is strongly adverse to the overland route.[10]

Speaking of General Grant's advance by the overland route, Mr. Swinton says: "It had been repeatedly essayed during the prior three years by Burnside and Hooker on the Fredericksburg route; by Pope and Meade by the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. Uniform ill success had attended each attempted advance, and the many repulses the Army of the Potomac had met on that line had marked it with a bloody condemnation." [11]

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[4] *History Confederate War*, I, 353.
[5] Johnston, *Narrative*, 101.
[6] *North American Review*, CXLIX, 36.
[7] *Ibid.*, 43.
[8] *Bird's-Eye View of the Civil War*, 199.
[9] *Story of the Civil War*, I, 241.
[10] *Army of the Potomac*, 406-408.
[11] *Ibid.*, 406, 407.

General Whittier too condemns it: "McClellan wisely and cautiously deliberated on a plan of campaign. The overland route urged by Mr. Lincoln and the politicians was most distasteful to him. He saw the perils, which all succeeding commanders vainly tried to overcome." [12] "The best military men considered this plan [the coast route] almost certain of success. Had it been carried out, the advance of McDowell would have enclosed the rebel army between him and McClellan or compelled it to fall back on Richmond. This would have rendered any delay at Yorktown unnecessary and no battle would have occurred until the army stood before Richmond." [13]

The Richmond *Whig* of June 14th, 1862, alluding to the coast route in connection with other movements intended to overwhelm the Confederate capital, declares that "The plan was a gigantic one, and in all probability would have succeeded but for the masterly movements of Jackson." But there would have been no field for Jackson's movements if McClellan's advice had been followed. Mr. J. T. Headley commends the coast route very warmly.[14] General Fry, a strong administration partisan, admits the superiority of the coast route.[15] General Imboden of the Confederate army gives equally emphatic testimony. "McClellan had planned and organized a masterly movement to capture, hold and occupy the Valley and the Piedmont region; and if his subordinates had been equal to the task, and there had been no interference from Washington, it is probable that the Confederate army would have been driven out of Virginia and Richmond captured by midsummer, 1862." [16]

It is probable that no military authority will after this defend the overland route, for we are not left to depend on theory or opinion or speculation. Actual warfare supplied a demonstration of the advantages and wisdom of the coast route, and the lamentable experience of McDowell, Burnside,

[12] Misc., *Historical Society of Massachusetts*, I, 226.
[13] Moore, *History of Great Rebellion.*
[14] *The Great Rebellion*, I, 383.
[15] *North American Review*, CXLIX, 732.
[16] *Battles and Leaders*, II, 283.

Hooker, and Grant made equally certain the almost fatal perils of the overland route, the appalling price paid for any benefit derived from it, and above all its utter failure to secure the purpose of its advocates and projectors,—that is, of keeping a large army between Washington and the enemy.

Both McClellan and Grant found that the key point of success was on the James River south of Richmond. If the James had been open when McClellan was pushed out into the morasses of the Peninsula with only a third of the army he had requested and should have been supplied with, he would have arrived there without the necessity of striking a blow. As it was, in spite of heart-breaking obstacles, discouragements, and difficulties, he arrived there finally with his army in splendid condition, full of hope and courage, full of fighting capacity, inspired with an enthusiastic confidence in the skill of its leader and in its own ability to meet with credit the bravest the South could bring. And these propitious circumstances gave every promise of victory.

General Grant did not willingly take the overland route. He, too, preferred the coast route, but being forced upon the former line of action, pushed his way forward with his usual energy and vigor; but the result of his march demonstrated above all else, by actual test, the terrible folly of the Administration's insistence upon "The Bloody Way," even under the most favorable conditions. We will have more to say of this campaign of 1864 in a later chapter.

Mr. Stanton has scattered the seeds of prejudice so widely that many who admit, or rather strongly assert, the wisdom of the coast route at the same time condemn General McClellan for not abandoning it. They do not put the case in those terms, of course, as the contradiction would be too manifest; but the meaning is just that and nothing else. They say he was right in rejecting the slaughterous line urged by Mr. Stanton, through the President, yet they charge him with hesitation, inertia, and lack of aggressiveness for not having done what he and Stanton both saw would surely shut him out from the coast route. The astute Secretary was eager to have an attack made on the rebel forces at Manassas or

on the Potomac or on the line of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Any of these measures the Secretary believed, and the General knew, would surely result in binding McClellan securely to the overland route. That is why Stanton wanted such action; that is why McClellan was averse to it. It is the sheerest frivolity of reasoning to contend that McClellan could smite the foe at Manassas and then withdraw and go to Richmond by the coast route. If he defeated Johnston, he would be forced to pursue him, and that would be the end of the coast route. If he was defeated, the Administration would be too frightened to allow him to take the coast route. So in either case the movement would destroy his cherished plan. Moreover, why do an unnecessary thing? McClellan predicted that Washington, the Potomac, and the railroad would be entirely relieved of the Southerners as soon as the campaign began. This view was more than verified. The moment the Peninsular campaign was definitely decided upon, the Potomac, the railroad, and Manassas were abandoned at once. Every Southern soldier vanished from the vicinity of the National capital.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WAY TO POWER—A NEW COMMANDER

The desire for untrammeled supremacy and despotic power now called forth all the astuteness of the new Secretary. The downfall of McClellan was not the only object in life with him. It was merely an incident, though an indispensable one, to his acquisition of unquestioned authority.

The new Secretary formulated his plans in a manner which would have delighted his Florentine prototype and, on taking up the reins of office, proceeded without delay to set them in operation.

First, the wires from all the military districts were for the first time in the history of the country centred in the office of the Secretary of War.[1] "He centred the telegraph in the War Department, where the publication of news, which might prematurely reach the enemy, could be supervised, and if necessary changed." This movement made him the national press agent; and by the manipulation of news enabled him to favor certain officers and injure others, but above all it enabled him to bring a pressure to bear upon the President through the apparently spontaneous voice of the people in widely separated sections. His use of the press to destroy General Sherman is a familiar example of his methods.

Second, clearly in order to fortify his authority and control the President, if he was not the sole instigator, he was surely among the first to conceive the idea of a Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War, a body which has done immeasurable mischief ever since. "It called generals and statesmen before it and questioned them like refractory school boys."[2] The Hon. Henry Wilson tells us: "I think

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 217, 218.
[2] Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, V, 150.

he [Stanton] drew the resolution to empower the Committee on the Conduct of the War." With this committee he maintained the closest and most intimate relations. To him the committee looked for information and advice, for besides being the fountainhead of news of the war, was he not a most learned and capable lawyer? The efficacy of such an agency in persuading a reluctant president or in dealing with a stubborn general can not easily be overestimated. It is equally obvious that under the skilful direction of Mr. Stanton the press could be made to supply reasons for action by the committee and the committee in turn supply rich material for the press.

Third, the Cabinet. This was a means of pressure of which Mr. Stanton made unstinted use, as Mr. Welles reveals and Mr. Chase confesses.

In all these agencies Mr. Stanton no doubt had in view a trait of Mr. Lincoln which is recorded by his nearest friends, —that is, his susceptibility to influence, except in matters of the rarest and most vital importance.

All these agencies were employed to secure the ruin of the general in chief.

So far as the author has ascertained, the order of January 27th, 1862, inspired by Mr. Stanton, was the first order of its kind ever issued in the United States since its birth as a nation. Its number confirms this view. It is so designated and numbered as clearly to indicate an intention to conduct all the operations of the army and navy, as the Comte de Paris says, "from the depths of the White House."

In his communication of February 3d, 1862, McClellan, recognizing the hostile environment, deals with the army as it then was and contends for his plan upon this basis. He rests his calculations as to the number available to him on the actual coming in of the men. That is what the phrase "I hope to have 110,000 to 140,000 men" evidently means. He was not sure how many would be at hand at the time of starting. That is a point concerning which the Secretary of War would naturally be much better advised than he was.

He had concluded that he could hope no longer for the

fulfilment of his wishes under the conditions about him, but must patriotically do the best he could with such a force as might be on hand when the transports for the army would be ready.

On that very day, February the 3d,—he received a letter from the President, as from another officer equal in knowledge and skill and superior in rank, challenging the wisdom of the coast plan compared with what the President calls "My plan,"—that is, "The Bloody Way," the overland route.

The letter begins: "My Dear Sir: You and I have distinct and different plans for a movement of the Army of the Potomac. Does not your plan involve a greatly larger expenditure of time and money than mine? Wherein is a victory more certain by your plan than mine? Wherein is a victory more valuable by your plan than mine? . . ." What an exhibition of lamentable conceit this letter is!

Here is an expert strategist, sprung fully equipped so to speak from the head of Jove, without need of military education, training, or experience, and above all with a mental endowment, excellent in its way but wholly unadapted, because of its lack of method and its incapacity for detail, to deal with the problems of military science.

> "But man, proud man,
> Drest in a little brief authority,
> Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
> His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
> Plays such fantastic tricks before high Heaven
> As make the angels weep."

But there was a strong substratum of common sense in the President, which, despite the crafty influence and persuasion of Mr. Stanton and despite the urgency of his ambition, gradually set him right, for two years later he wrote to General Grant: "The particulars of your plans I neither know nor seek to know." [3] And yet a speck of the Stantonian virus still remained, for on another occasion he confidently revealed to General Grant a plan of operations. "He brought out a map of Virginia on which he had evidently marked

[3] *Letters of Abraham Lincoln*, II, 22-24.

every position occupied by the Federal and Confederate armies up to that time. He pointed out on the map two streams which empty into the Potomac and suggested that the army might be moved on boats and landed between the mouths of these streams. We would then have the Potomac to bring our supplies, and the tributaries would protect our flanks while we moved out. I listened respectfully, but did not suggest that the same streams would protect Lee's flanks while he was shutting us up." The General adds: "I did not communicate my plans to the President, nor did I to the Secretary of War, or to General Halleck." [4]

Regardless of the route to be taken, as the Government had wisely acquiesced in McClellan's ideas of an adequate army, enlistments should have been hurried with the greatest possible dispatch, vigor, and energy; and the total force required should have been collected in Washington within two months after the battle of Bull Run,—July 21st,—that is, by October 1st, 1861. Of course this armament would not have been sufficiently trained and disciplined to begin offensive operations before the severe winter blocked an advance, but it would have been ready to move at the earliest moment when the elements were auspicious in the spring.

On November 20th, 1861,[5] the army could turn out only 50,000 men, and a considerable part of these needed a few months of instruction and discipline before they would be reliable soldiers. It should also be held in mind that a large proportion of the number stated was a part of the garrison of Washington.

The colossal work of disciplining, drilling, instructing, and equipping the troops as rapidly as they arrived went on with unabated energy throughout the winter and was still in progress in March, 1862. Numbers were wanting, equipment was lacking; many were newcomers, and still novices and raw recruits. The great work of making Washington practically impregnable, with a comparatively small force to man its forts and batteries, was also still under way.

[4] Grant, *Memoirs*, II, 123.
[5] Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, IV, 469.

If it was wise to enter upon an undertaking of such magnitude, it was equally wise to complete it.

The history of the Army of the Potomac supplies a practical demonstration, irresistibly convincing, of the wisdom of providing a great army and of thoroughly perfecting its discipline and organization.

The President had acquiesced in this view; no doubt his intelligence commended it and constant daily intercourse with McClellan confirmed his approbation. But almost from the moment of the assembling of Congress the influence of intermeddlers was felt, and, unmindful of all opposing conditions, they brought a strong pressure upon the President for immediate action; the result was the undated memorandum which by its queries showed that they, heedless of conditions, elements, and the certainty of disaster, intended to shove the army out at once,—in the depths of winter.

Surely Edwin M. Stanton was the most singular man who ever appeared in American history. The story of his machinations is like a tale of the intrigues of medieval times or of the darkest days of Philip the Second as depicted by Motley. At the time of which we speak he was apparently standing aloof from the struggle over the plan of campaign, indifferent to it; taking no part in it or in the pressure to force the unready army out into the mire; doing no overt act and saying no word to McClellan to indicate any interest in these matters, and yet there is no historian of the time who does not recognize that his was the hand that moved all the marionettes. So they tear away the veil and treat him as if he had acted openly; as if he had held daily interviews with the general in chief, persuading, inciting, urging a movement of the army in general, and especially a movement by the overland route; and this explains the otherwise untrue statement of Nicolay and Hay that Stanton was continually inciting McClellan to activity, and it also explains the similar statement of Gorham that Stanton found McClellan "as obstinate to his persuasions" as he had been to Lincoln's. As we have seen and will still further see, Stanton's persuasions were practical not direct persuasions, and that they came from him he kept carefully

concealed. As soon as Stanton was securely in office, he no longer courted McClellan's friendship. It became more and more difficult to see him, and McClellan became satisfied that Stanton had estranged the President and that this made it very rarely possible to have an interview with him. The days of daily exchange of views were gone forever. It was arctic weather for the General in Chief. But still the Secretary professed to be friendly; and at the very time that he was employing every resource to force the army out, unready as he, as the head of the War Department, well knew it was, he said to General Barnard: "General McClellan has no firmer friend than myself. . . . I think General McClellan ought not to move until he is fully ready." [6]

This is of moment as a revelation of Stanton's marvelous double-dealing.

[6] Letter of General Barnard, March 19, 1862; McClellan, *Own Story*, 246.

CHAPTER XIX

THE AUTOCRAT OF THE WAR—THE FIGHT AGAINST THE COAST ROUTE—AMAZING TREACHERY

It appears that General McClellan made no special reply to the President's argumentative note of February 3d, as he regarded his exhaustive letter of the same date, already forwarded, a sufficient response.

Mr. Stanton apparently expected by his underground method of pressing McClellan, through the President, to induce him to yield up his plan of advance by the coast route.

According to Colonel Powell, Stanton's theory was that "everything concerned his department and that it was he who was carrying on the war." [1] Speaking of the Secretary's agencies, he informs us of the Committee on the Conduct of the War that "its records bear unmistakable proof of the partisan purpose and spirit of its efforts, and so it came about that from the so-called Cabinet and Congress and the Committee, a junto self-styled, the Administration was evolved, composed of many incongruous elements, held together by a purpose so to manage the resources tendered to the government by the unbounded liberality and patriotism of the loyal states that the power it had usurped should be perpetuated by the overthrow of all who might seem to antagonize a newly born radical party. Its efforts were directed by skillful and experienced politicians, and by act and word Mr. Lincoln was forced to confess himself unable to withstand the influence it wielded." [2]

No reply was ever given to McClellan's communication of February 3d, 1862, nor was any direct assent to his plan conveyed to him, so far as appears; but after more than three

[1] *History of the Fifth Army Corps*, 32.
[2] *Ibid.*, 34.

weeks of hesitation and delay on the part of the administration, the necessary order for transports to convey the troops to Fortress Monroe was issued. This was a practical assent to the coast route.

But even after the transports had been ordered Mr. Stanton, through the President, still resisted, and continued to urge movements to open the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and also to urge the clearing of the Potomac of the enemy. McClellan, as we have pointed out, foresaw, first, that entering upon these enterprises would bring him in conflict with the whole force of the enemy and lead to an abandonment of his coast plan, as no doubt the Secretary of War both expected and desired; second, that these special enterprises would be a waste of time, money, and men, and that his advance would of itself naturally effect the desired purpose.

Accordingly, the General did not act upon such suggestions, which only meant a still active opposition to the coast plan of attack. Certain authors seem to be under the impression that in the beginning of March the President, still adverse to the coast route, although the work of gathering the great flotilla of transports for the landing of 146,000 men at Fortress Monroe was now far advanced, compelled the Commander of the Army to call a council of generals, to pass upon the wisdom of the plan as if it were still an open question.

We have the very best evidence that it was General McClellan who suggested such submission of the plan, though he did so under the pressure of a situation that resulted from a device so crafty and malevolent that nothing in the life of Mr. Lincoln makes it likely, or we may say credible, that he conceived it.

Early on the morning of the 8th of March, McClellan, at the President's request, was in the White House. Mr. Lincoln seemed to find great difficulty and embarrassment in bringing himself to speak of the "very ugly matter," as he termed it, which was the chief occasion of the interview, and talked of many other things before revealing it. At last the infamous matter was set forth,—namely, "That it had been represented to him, and that he was inclined to believe, that

the coast route was conceived with the traitorous intent of leaving the capital defenseless and turning it over to the enemy." This ruse to turn McClellan from his project was surely hatched by Stanton. It was a lawyer's trick and on a plane with the least reputable devices of the police court. The effect of such an imputation upon a man at once so patriotic and so upright as McClellan can readily be imagined. Lincoln was not a good instrument to ensure the success of such a plot, for when McClellan resented the attack with honest and hot indignation and demanded a retraction the President was much moved, and at once complied and repeatedly apologized.

It was in this connection that McClellan, seeing the malice of his enemies, proposed that the plan should be submitted to the generals of division, who were to meet that same day for another purpose.[3] This was agreed to, and the plan was submitted to the generals accordingly. These generals were: Blenker, Casey, Heintzelman, Keyes, McCall, McDowell, Andrew Porter, Fitz John Porter, W. F. Smith, Sumner, Naglee (for Hooker), and Barnard.

McClellan was hazarding everything, for if the decision was adverse, that would surely be the end of the coast plan, and he must then fairly and in good faith follow out the overland plan of advance; it was implied that the decision would be equally conclusive upon the Administration, and if he secured a favorable decision he had a right to expect that the Government would then in good faith do everything necessary to make the advance by the coast route a success. But the Administration was not acting in good faith, as will clearly appear, and its acts at this time are so far at variance with what would be expected from Mr. Lincoln's character, so tricky, cunning, and lacking in candor and even in common honesty, as to assure us that the moving hand was Stanton's. Despite Lincoln's consent to the council, Stanton still opposed it and programmed a line of action to defeat the verdict and "beat McClellan on the execution," as cunning lawyers say, by preventing it from being carried into effect.

[3] McClellan, *Own Story*, 196.

This was highly treacherous and discreditable.

General McClellan, actuated by a commendable spirit of fairness, took no part in the meeting of the generals and was not even present.

The verdict of the council did more than to force the Administration to give an ostensible assent to McClellan's plan of campaign. To endorse the plan was to endorse the commander, at a time when we now learn that Stanton had brought so much pressure to bear on Lincoln as to persuade him to remove McClellan altogether.

The accusation of treason (no doubt devised by Stanton) in urging the coast route was crushed by the strong endorsement of the council, and so the venomous purpose of disgracing the commander was foiled. In the face of the decision it could not be carried out.

CHAPTER XX

THE COAST ROUTE APPROVED—UNDERGROUND OPPOSITION

As the result of the submission of the plan, eight of the twelve generals approved it,—namely, Blenker, Casey, Keyes, McCall, the two Porters, Smith, and Naglee. And only four,—namely, McDowell, Sumner, Heintzelman, and Barnard, were against it. This should have ended the struggle against the plan, but as will be seen it was but fairly begun.

The cunning of Mr. Stanton and the extent to which he would go to carry his point are well illustrated here. With Machiavellian subtlety he urged Mr. Lincoln to reject the decision; he insisted that the result should be viewed as a vote of four to one against McClellan's plan, for the eight were McClellan men and should be viewed as one.[1] The President would not go so far; the responsibility he said was too great; but the alternative course pursued was hardly more straightforward or reputable. The decision was hardly announced when, without any consultation with General McClellan or even any prior knowledge on his part, an order was issued dividing his army into corps (which he did not desire), and, as a still more flagrant and inexcusable indignity, making three of the four generals who opposed his plan of action (as if to reward them for their fidelity) corps commanders, the four being McDowell, Sumner, Heintzelman, and Keyes. Only the last of these was in sympathy with the commander's views.

Not one of these men, not even Keyes, would have been selected by the commander, as one may learn from his memoirs. He had too many better men of eminent fitness and capacity to select from. The author of the excellent biography of General Meade says: "Of the degree of capacity indicated and reputation made by these officers, it is sufficient to say

[1] Flower, *Edwin McMasters Stanton*, 139.

that theirs are not among the great names of the war. Sumner and Heintzelman were already well advanced in years: Keyes was soon retired; and McDowell, like McClellan, had already suffered from being expected to do with raw volunteers that which only an organized and disciplined army could accomplish." [2] This action was plainly a rebuke to the "obstinacy" of which Mr. Gorham informs us and a reminder that further persistence in the coast route would be visited with still heavier penalties. It was one of Mr. Stanton's indirect "persuasions" already alluded to.

One by one the plans of McClellan for putting down the rebellion by a swift, decisive, irresistible campaign were being crushed to the earth. Through the Administration's lack of energy, not only was he forced to content himself finally with half the requisite number of men, but through the slow coming in of materials and recruits much of that half was far from being as well disciplined and equipped as he desired; and now an inimical influence was interfering with the organization of his army, appointing his lieutenants for him, and worst of all maliciously selecting those known to be opposed to his views. "It was through the pressure of the Committee on the Conduct of the War and Mr. Stanton that corps were formed and indeed by them, as a species of Aulic Council, that all the larger war questions were decided." [3]

Speaking of the council of generals, Pennypacker in his able critique of Michie's *General McClellan,* after alluding to the circumstances which forced the general to suggest it, gives his opinion that "The nature of the proposition sufficiently indicates the conditions which made it necessary, conditions under which no general could hope to conduct campaigns to a successful issue." [4]

The interference with the management of the army by selecting corps commanders adverse to the campaign was not the only bad feature of the order of March 8th. It also in effect divided the army, which was already too small, into

[2] *Dial,* XXXI, 319.
[3] Swinton, *Army of the Potomac,* 89, n.
[4] *Dial,* XXXI, 319.

three parts: one to guard Washington; one to clear the Potomac; and the third, of 50,000 men only, to invade Virginia.

If McClellan had had the least spark of the politician in him, he would surely have taken the hint and "got right" and ceased to be "obstinate" with Mr. Stanton. He would have yielded to his "persuasions."

But on March 9th Johnston left Manassas, and the railroad and the Potomac were cleared of the enemy.

In other words, the moment the coast route was fixed upon, Johnston evacuated the vicinity of Washington and went to meet the invaders. The Comte de Paris believes that this movement came from a "leak" at Washington.[5]

"At that time the communication between Washington and the Confederate authorities in Richmond was remarkably direct and on March 9th, 1862, the enemy, evidencing their appreciation of the efficiency of General McClellan's plan, abandoned their lines at Manassas and on the Potomac." [6]

The situation was a chilling one for the young commander. He was encompassed with opposition. The President no longer sought him daily, but was estranged and avoided him entirely. After Stanton took the helm, the interviews between Lincoln and McClellan were very rare and never of the former cordial nature.

This aloofness was in itself another of Mr. Stanton's "persuasions." If there had been anything of the courtier about the General, he might have changed this polar atmosphere to one of genial warmth the instant he felt its frostiness. If he had diplomatically affected to believe that the new Secretary was the cordial friend he professed to be, if he had sought his advice both as a lawyer and a friend in so critical a situation, and, if convinced by his reasoning(?), he had ministered to his greed of authority, kept in constant touch with him, and fully yielded to the views born of the Secretary's fears,—if all this had happened, the two men would have been friends. Stanton's "persuasions" were all overtures toward that end, but McClellan was not politician enough to see this.

[5] *History of the Civil War*, I, 613.
[6] *Fifth Army Corps*, 36-7.

He viewed them not as allurements to draw him into line, but only as vexatious annoyances to handicap and harass him in the carrying out of his plan. That all the manifestations of opposition and enmity, while on the one hand they might be regarded as menaces of destruction, might also be looked upon as intimations that he could surround himself with warm support, sympathy, and friendship,—if he chose to be wise and to conform to conditions which were imperative, irresistible, and unchangeable,—evidently never once dawned upon the general's mind. He was occupied entirely with military problems and not with politics. So he found himself practically marooned as far as the sympathetic aid of the Government and its coöperation with his plans were concerned.

One is surprised that many well meaning writers should fail to notice that Johnston's withdrawal demonstrated the folly of incurring loss of life and the blunder of going to great expense, by special expeditions, to enforce it. They fail to mention, and perhaps to observe, that the result vindicated General McClellan's sagacity and military acumen, and that justice requires this acknowledgment; several even omit all mention of the withdrawal.

Nor were Mr. Stanton and his adherents more ready to give McClellan the credit due to his wisdom when so verified than are these thoughtless or unfair historians. They were not pleased as they should have been. They were enraged. They were blind to reasons for applauding his judgment, and the National press agent, Mr. Stanton, made the people blind to it as well. What they saw was that with the voluntary retirement of the Confederates all chance to get McClellan entangled with the enemy, therefore drawn away from the coast route and fixed in the overland route, had vanished; and above all, to them the withdrawal of the rebels proved with absolute certainty a weakness which to their minds and upon their superficial consideration of the matter would have ensured victory, if McClellan had followed their views and advanced upon Manassas. "The enemy had escaped through McClellan's lack of aggressiveness." So they hastily concluded; and, accordingly, a number of unre-

flecting writers find proof of the alleged weakness in the fact that while the rebel batteries were all apparently filled with guns, the guns were found to be dummies, guns of painted wood; and the outcry of derision over this gives a strong example of the biasing influence of political fervor. These same writers in their zeal forgot what they had previously narrated,—namely, that the Confederates had a large amount of artillery at the battle of Bull Run. A considerable part of the description of that battle is always given to the account of the deadly work of the rebel masked batteries. It is admitted also that other cannon were taken by them in the rout of the Union army. Now, being so equipped with artillery, why should they not use it? It is incredible that they would not. They did. We know all the facts now from the inside. As we have shown, Johnston knew all that was transpiring in Washington,—all the movements of the Army of the Potomac. We are told that "there were men occupying important posts in the Government and in the army, who were the secret agents of the rebels and who regarded treason and perfidy as chivalry and honor."

So General Johnston undoubtedly knew of McClellan's plan as soon as he was forced to divulge it, but knew too that it was still doubtful that it would be acted upon; but the ordering of the transports made it so nearly certain that the advance by the Peninsula would be made that apparently he then began to get ready to move the army; as the first step, he began to take away the guns and substitute dummies so gradually and stealthily that the Southern soldiers in general did not know of it; and the moment the verdict of the council of generals was given on March 8th all the Confederate forces were withdrawn.

Mr. Eggleston's account is that Johnston "transported his artillery to the Peninsula east of Richmond to meet his adversary's confidently expected advance in that quarter." [7] And Mr. Pollard says: "During the winter Johnston removed his cannon and dummies were put in." [8]

[7] *History of the Confederate War*, I, 353.
[8] *Lost Cause*, 262, 263.

The Government advices while Johnston was at Manassas were that he had an army of over 100,000 men. McClellan occupied the works on March 10th and found evidence in the number of caps and other indicia of the recent presence of a large army.[9]

[9] McClellan, *Own Story*, 179.

CHAPTER XXI

THE HIDDEN HAND

As McClellan still continued obtuse and unable to recognize the pressing invitations extended to him (by implication) to set himself right, another "persuasion" now appeared, and as usual without any prior consultation, notice, or intimation,—in the shape of a war order degrading him from his rank of general in chief. This was followed by other orders, taking from under his control even the forces in Virginia, excepting the Army of the Potomac.

The President afterward admitted that this series of military orders was forced upon him. "He did not know but they were all wrong, and did know that some of them were." [1]

There is something so indefensible, so brusque, so undignified, so lacking in the most ordinary requirements of official intercourse, in the treatment of McClellan by the Administration at this time that the best apparent defense for Mr. Lincoln in the matter is that he was not able to withstand the influences about him, and that none of these measures were his. They certainly need more earnest and satisfactory apologies than have ever been given.

If the prospective operations had been thoroughly talked over with McClellan when his plan was no longer a secret, the attitude of the Administration would appear in a far more favorable light.

If Mr. Stanton had said frankly, "We are afraid and all your assurances fail to give us confidence; as soon as the army is taken from between us and Richmond the rebels will surely rush in and seize the Capital," the position would not have been glorious, but at least it would have been open and candid and not furtive, masked, and crafty.

[1] Grant, *Memoirs*, ii, 122.

Again, if General McClellan had known at this time that the Secretary of War "invariably carried a dagger under his vest," he would no doubt have rightly divined that the foundation of all the opposition to the coast route lay in an ignoble but ineradicable terror of an attack; and he might have found means of giving a feeling of security to the Secretary, and so have gained his good-will. But it seems that it was not only the enemy which Mr. Stanton feared. He feared the Union army too. Its presence in Washington was a cause of alarm to him. That it might set itself above all civil authority was to his mind easily possible. Intense political feeling is so akin to patriotism as to be easily mistaken for it. Its inspiration is the supposed welfare of the nation, and in its highest glow those of opposing views are regarded as traitors seeking to destroy the commonwealth.

For a long time after the war this feeling blinded many writers, and prevented them from seeing the significance and meaning of the attitude of the Administration toward General McClellan in the spring of 1862 and long afterward. This is lamentable, for never was a sentiment noble in itself more degraded in its application. The writer has the best of reasons for knowing that one may warmly espouse "first, last, and all the time" a succession of Republican Presidents and yet recognize the great wrong and injury done to General McClellan, and through him to the country. And all this bitterness of deluded writers springs from what? From the manipulations of a man who had no politics; who, when it "feathered his nest" to be so, was a virulent Democrat, as his own letters already cited show, and the most radical of Radicals when that better served his love of power, and who, if the new party had declined in strength, would surely have left it to ally himself with whatever other organization seemed more promising of success and of reward to its adherents.

Such a man is wholly devoid of principle; yet under the alluring guise of patriotism this master craftsman manipulated Congress and the committee he was instrumental in creating, manipulated the press by becoming the national news

agent, manipulated the Cabinet, and through all these agencies brought a pressure to bear upon the President which he could never permanently resist; then, as the harvest of his work, crippled the reputation of an able general, brought repeated discredit upon the measures of a good-hearted executive, and as the final result prolonged the war for years and needlessly sacrificed hundreds of thousands of lives and wasted thousands of millions of dollars. In view of all the homes desolated through his misdirected and sinister activities, it is hardly a matter for wonder that in his case even "death did not materially soften dislike" and that his memory has been "bitterly pursued beyond the grave."

That his acts should be still defended, though by a decreasing number of adherents, under the belief that they were Lincoln's acts, representing the conclusions of the President's deliberate judgment, and that the noble, generous, and gifted man whom he maligned and whose career as a general he destroyed should be misunderstood and undervalued by many writers is one of the grim jests of history. Such writers, thinking that they are defending Lincoln, vindicate Stanton's malevolence. Stanton's career would now be impossible. Present conditions prove that officials can no longer hide acts against the interests of the people under the shield of the party name. Stanton's course was personal and individual, not political.

The reason assigned for reducing General McClellan's command is given in the order itself. It was that he had taken the field. No author credits this reason. The actual cause was too apparent. This reason was made absurd by later events, for General Grant, though likewise in the field, retained the supreme command throughout his Virginia campaigns.

A minor incident illustrates how far the Government went and how completely it ignored the observances of official life, with the aim of persuading McClellan to abandon the coast route, or to punish him for his "obstinacy" in adhering to it. Upon the issuance of the order last mentioned, the office of the general in chief in Washington was at once closed up in his

absence and the papers in it taken possession of by the War Department. The General never entered the office again and never again had his official papers in his possession. Even the little privilege of delivering over the office and its contents was denied to him. Such unseemly discourtesy to one of McClellan's standing and character was disgraceful to all who participated in it or permitted it. An act at once so petty, irritating, and needless forbids any unbiased mind from believing that the attitude toward McClellan was inspired by patriotism, or any other worthy or defensible sentiment.

Besides degrading the commander to the control of a single army, the order of March the 10th directed in the most mandatory terms that the general should set out on his campaign not later than March the 18th, and with only 50,000 men. The transports to convey the army to Fort Monroe were not ordered until February the 27th, and were not expected to be ready until thirty days later. If this order had been fully enforced, can any one doubt the result? Imagine what chance General Grant would have had of escaping destruction in the Wilderness, if he had been forced to fight under similar conditions. In effectives Lee had 60,000; Grant, 120,000. If McClellan had advanced with only 50,000 men, he would have been met by Lee with an army larger, as we shall soon show, than that of Grant.

Was there no responsibility in ordering out so small a force against these victorious Virginians, fighting on their own soil and for their own homes? Nothing could have saved the army from practical annihilation, if the order had been executed.

CHAPTER XXII

INTO THE MIRE

The withdrawal of all Confederate troops from the vicinity of Washington and of the Potomac removed all pretext for sending out so inadequate a force and saved the army from disaster, but the report of the Assistant Secretary of War shows that he was at first asked to provide shipment for only 50,000 troops.[1]

The retirement of the Southerners rendered a modification of the coast plan imperative. If the Urbana plan could have been kept secret, McClellan would have interposed his army between Richmond and the rebel army at Manassas, but the enforced divulgence of his design now rendered this impossible; so, according to the established precedent, another council of generals convened on March the 13th at Fairfax Courthouse, to which was submitted the alternative project set forth in the commander's letter of February 3d,—the project of advancing by way of Fortress Monroe and the Peninsula. This was approved by all, provided the Merrimac could be neutralized, transports supplied, naval aid against the York River batteries obtained, and a sufficient force left at Washington to give an entire feeling of security. The President approved, on condition that Washington be made entirely safe and Manassas protected against recapture.

The embarkation began on the 17th of March and continued in rapidly increasing volume until the 5th of April.

General McClellan boarded the Steamer Commodore on the 1st of April and started for Fort Monroe early on the morning of the 2d.

In one respect it was a sad setting forth. Here was a man,—unquestionably endowed with splendid talents; of

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 237.

clean, pure life and high ideals; one who had accomplished a work of such undeniable merit that friend and foe have joined in praising it,—yet going off as if to banishment, without a word of cheer or encouragement, without the slightest assurance of sympathy or support. No one representing the Administration went to see him off. No one wished him Godspeed in a campaign in which the welfare of the nation was very deeply involved. And what had he done to create this grave displeasure? He had merely adhered without vacillation to the plan of advance which his well-trained military capacity assured him was the best, and which is now known to have been actually and incomparably the best.

How different was General Grant's entrance upon his Virginia Campaign of 1864! All possible aid, coöperation, and sympathy were extended to him by the Government. He was assured that he should have all the troops he wanted. He started when he pleased. There was no pressure. He tells us that about this time,—from March the 26th to May the 4th,—he had weekly conferences with Messrs. Stanton and Lincoln,[2] and that "By the 27th of April spring had so far advanced as to justify me in fixing a day for the great move." [3] In other words, he waited until he felt sure that the winter was over, and no one goaded him to action.

Every suggestion was complied with, without hesitation, and yet General Grant, who had at first intended to remain in the West after having been made lieutenant-general, found that he must stay in the East, for "No one else could probably resist the pressure that would be brought upon him to desist from his own plans and pursue others." [4]

McClellan, on the contrary, was as completely isolated as if he had been on one side of the world and the President and the Secretary of War on the other.

McClellan was setting out upon his chosen course, but not in his chosen way. To force the army out into the swamps of the Peninsula until the rains were over was reck-

[2] Grant, *Memoirs*, II, 141.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*, 116.

less of life to the verge of criminality. It was like fighting Heaven and all the forces of nature. Moreover, the force which was to go was absurdly insufficient, and this, as McClellan recognized, made the enterprise hazardous.

In his November communication he for the first time alludes to a lesser number than that first named, but merely from unavoidable necessity and for the purpose of getting in a blow before the coming of the snows.

In his letter of February 3d he says: "In the earliest papers I submitted to the President, I asked for an effective and movable force far exceeding the aggregate now on the banks of the Potomac. I have not the force I asked for." [5]

This is a protest against the inadequacy of the army for the great work demanded of it.

If he had possessed a little of Mr. Stanton's political cunning, he would have added, "I will do the very best I can, but if disaster comes from the disadvantage of operating under present conditions and with an army so inferior to that which I advised you to provide, the responsibility will be entirely yours," and he would probably have been surprised at the magical effect of the intimation.

As will be demonstrated later, to keep the President fully alive as to his responsibilities was the key to the situation. But this was a *terra ignota* to the commander.

On the 14th of March the Secretary of War called for a report on the status of the Army of the Potomac, which was presented on the 19th, as follows:

"Sir: I have the honor to submit the following notes on the proposed operations of the active portion of the Army of the Potomac.

"The proposed plan of campaign is to assume Fort Monroe as the first base of operations, taking the line of Yorktown and West Point upon Richmond as the line of operations, Richmond being the objective point. It is assumed that the fall of Richmond involves that of Norfolk and the whole of Virginia; also that we shall fight a decisive battle between West Point and Richmond, to give which battle the

[5] McClellan, *Own Story*, 230.

rebels will concentrate all their available forces, understanding, as they will, that it involves the fate of their cause. It therefore follows:

"1st. That we should collect all our available forces and operate upon adjacent lines, maintaining perfect communication between our columns.

"2d. That no time should be lost in reaching the field of battle.

"The advantages of the Peninsula between York and James Rivers are too obvious to need explanation. It is also clear that West Point should as soon as possible be reached and used as our main depot, that we may have the shortest line of land transportation for our supplies and the use of the York River.

"There are two methods of reaching this point:

"1st. By moving directly from Fort Monroe as a base, and trusting to the roads for our supplies, at the same time landing a strong corps as near Yorktown as possible, in order to turn the rebel lines of defense south of Yorktown; thence to reduce Yorktown and Gloucester by a siege, in all probability involving a delay of weeks, perhaps.

"2d. To make a combined naval and land attack upon Yorktown the first object of the campaign. This leads to the most rapid and decisive results. To accomplish this, the navy should at once concentrate upon the York River all their available and most powerful batteries. Its reduction should not in that case require many hours. A strong corps would be pushed up the York, under cover of the navy, directly upon West Point, immediately upon the fall of Yorktown, and we could at once establish our new base of operations at a distance of some twenty-five miles from Richmond, with every facility for developing and bringing into play the whole of our available force on either or both banks of the James.

"It is impossible to urge too strongly the absolute necessity of the full co-operation of the navy as a part of this programme. Without it the operations may be prolonged for many weeks, and we may be forced to carry in front several

strong positions, which by their aid could be turned without serious loss of either time or men.

"It is also of first importance to bear in mind the fact, already alluded to, that the capture of Richmond necessarily involves the prompt fall of Norfolk, while an operation against Norfolk, if successful at the beginning of the campaign, facilitates the reduction of Richmond merely by the demoralization of the rebel troops involved, and that after the fall of Norfolk we should be obliged to undertake the capture of Richmond by the same means which would have accomplished it in the beginning, having meanwhile afforded the rebels ample time to perfect their defensive arrangements; for they would well know, from the moment the Army of the Potomac changed its base to Fort Monroe, that Richmond must be its ultimate object.

"It may be summed up in a few words, that for prompt success of this campaign it is absolutely necessary that the navy should at once throw its whole available force, its most powerful vessels, against Yorktown. There is the most important point—there the knot to be cut. An immediate decision upon the subject-matter of this communication is highly desirable, and seems called for by the exigencies of the occasion." [6]

Despite the lowering skies, General McClellan must have felt a strong sensation of relief as the steamer bore him away from the City of Intrigues. He had a brave army, much smaller than was suitable, but efficient and reliable; and, removed from almost hourly worry and annoyance, he felt that with the 146,000 men to come from Washington and the additional 10,000 from Fort Monroe he might with fairly good fortune achieve great results.

And we may fancy that, with about 45,000 effectives then landed on the Peninsula, the young commander retired on the night of the 2d of April elated with the prospect of a successful and brilliant campaign.

[6] *Official War Records*, V, 57.

CHAPTER XXIII

MADDENING CONDITIONS—STANTON'S REVENGE

The forcing of the army out in March, 1862, was idiotically premature. General Grant was made supreme commander on the 9th of March, 1864. He did not stir until two months later, and even then only on his own volition. For what was he waiting? For the rains to stop. McClellan was pushed out seven weeks earlier, in a "phenomenal and unprecedented season," as was obvious to all. In 1862 General Grant would not have moved until the middle of June, if he had had the same absolute control that he had in 1864, and wisdom would have approved his prudence.

It is an interesting speculation of ethics to consider at what point the exposure of the lives of soldiers to needless sacrifice becomes murderous or treasonable. A commander who would send forward only a company at a time along an extended causeway so enfiladed and swept by an enemy's batteries that destruction was inevitable, and who, after a dozen companies had been so annihilated, would persist in sending company after company along that same road to death until his whole army was extinct, would surely incur guilt under either charge. Are those who stand higher up less responsible? When Americans contend with Americans, a small disadvantage turns the scale and invites destruction. And if handicap be added to handicap and discouragement to discouragement, as if to ensure disaster, what then is the responsibility, what then the guilt? McClellan's respite from worry was brief indeed. Not even a second night of surcease from care was allowed to him.

The conditions were surely dispiriting. The resources of the South were yet undrained and its spirit was unbroken. Its armies in Virginia were large and led by the best military genius of the South.

Therefore McClellan knew that a formidable armament was necessary to overcome these fierce fighters battling on familiar ground. And he had repeatedly urged this necessity, but without success.

The conditions which made a great army essential to assure success likewise demanded favorable conditions of season. Yet he was forced off when the Peninsula was, and continued to be through all his campaign, almost a bottomless mire.

Cooperative action of the Union armies everywhere was a vital element in General McClellan's scheme of operations, so that the separated forces of the Confederacy would be kept so busy at every point that not a man could be safely withdrawn from one point to strengthen another. Through the reduction of his authority, the power to secure such action was lost; and as the result,—in acknowledgment of his military capacity, as we will see,—the greatest Southern army ever seen in Virginia at any time during the war was gathered from every quarter to oppose him, and when the crisis was over these troops returned to their various stations. Worst of all, he was prevented from availing himself and the nation of the united strength of the various Union armies that were scattered senselessly over the Old Dominion. If the direction of these forces had been left with him, he could have overcome every other obstacle, even the lack of reinforcements.

All these elements of opposition to favorable action taxed his patience, fretted his spirit, and imperiled his operations to the utmost limit, but as he was confident of himself and of the devotion of his army, hope still burned brightly in him. At last his vexations were over. The rest lay with him and the army he had created.

An essential and vital part of his plan was the cooperation of the navy in overthrowing the hostile batteries on the York and James Rivers. This was one of the express conditions on which the council of March 13th had approved of the movement. In approving the report of the council the President endorsed this element of it, and as the navy was

not under McClellan's command it was incumbent upon the Administration to arrange for and secure its action, or rather to direct and enforce it, for here a valid reason existed upon Mr. Stanton's theory for a naval order requiring the necessary cooperation.

To his amazement, when already on the Peninsula, General McClellan found that the naval authorities had made no preparations to assist him, and had not been directed to do so. Even if this was merely negligence, it is difficult temperately to characterize the almost criminal lack of attention and total absence of interest in the Peninsular movement which made such an omission possible.

Stanton, on March the 19th, wrote that Mr. Lincoln would go immediately to Alexandria to confer with McClellan about it; but he did not go.[1]

"No adequate cooperation of the navy was arranged for or apparently contemplated by the authorities." [2] "It was at first intended that the navy should cooperate, but incredible as it may seem, the military authorities did not communicate with those of the navy, so the latter got no order and this part of the plan fell through." [3]

With his characteristic activity and attention to every detail, General McClellan kept this matter constantly before the mind of the Secretary of War, besides sending officers directly to Assistant Secretary Fox of the Navy. Ample proof of this energy and diligence will be found in volume XI, part 3, of the *Official Record,* on pages 15, 18, 24, and 28.

It was the dominant military authorities to whom Mr. Formby refers,—the men who had the power of directing naval action. It was the President, counseled and advised by the great military strategist Mr. Stanton, who was responsible for the inaction of the navy.

Stanton's sinister acts about this time indicate that this was but one of many methods used to make failure certain, and thereby prove that the coast plan of attack was a blunder.

[1] *Official Record,* XI, 3, 18.
[2] *Dial,* XXXI, 319, 320.
[3] Formby, *American Civil War,* 108.

It was one of the means used by the vindictive and relentless Secretary to destroy McClellan and gratify his revenge.

But the loss of the expected and necessary naval cooperation was not the only nor the hardest blow dealt at McClellan's hopes. By the reduction of his command, he lost control of the military situation as a whole. The army he desired and should have had was not given. He was forced to begin operations in the most unfavorable season imaginable; still, as he was to have 146,000 men from Washington and 10,000 more from Fortress Monroe, his brave heart hoped for good results. A few days before leaving Washington the President had an interview with the General at Alexandria, in which the latter was told that a strong pressure had been brought to give Blenker's division of 10,000 men to Fremont, but the President stated many reasons against it and promised that he would refuse the request. The outcome of this matter, like that of countless others, proves how absolutely Mr. Lincoln was in the hands of those about him, and especially of the astute Minister of War and his agencies; for the division of Blenker, despite the President's promise, was withdrawn, and the army which was already too small for its work, was thereby despoiled of 10,000 men; but the President, in response to McClellan's remonstrance, assured him that there would be no further reduction. The withdrawal of Blenker left 136,000 men as the starting force, to be augmented by 10,000 men from Fortress Monroe, making 146,000 in all.

But on April 3d he was informed that the force at Fortress Monroe and the fort itself were removed from his command. This left his total force 136,000 instead of 156,000 as at first, of which only about 53,000 were yet on the Peninsula. On the same day, just at the time when it was most necessary to keep up the strength of the armies, *recruiting was discontinued.* If this course had been pursued during General Grant's campaign in Virginia, the result would have been most disastrous to the Union cause, but the recruiting bureaus worked diligently to fill the depleting ranks, and 40,000 men were supplied during his march to Richmond. "But

more astounding than all, the Secretary of War had actually issued an order stopping enlistments of volunteers, and this month witnessed the anomalous, extraordinary spectacle of disbanded regiments and closed recruiting stations. The two great rebel armies were still in the field, while the Confederate Government had completed its conscription, which embraced all able-bodied men between eighteen and thirty-five, and thus more than doubled its military force. We, in the meantime, were losing by sickness, wounds and death, more than ten thousand men a month, and the great decisive battles were yet to be fought. It would seem that our victories West had deluded the Government into the belief that the war was actually over, or that some strange hallucination had seized it. The Secretary of War saw the rebel army doubling—ours rapidly diminishing, while the great struggle was yet to take place, and despite all bade the people who were rushing to the field, lay down their arms and go home. There is no occasion to go any farther, to account for the disaster that followed the two acts, one taking away a military head from the army, and substituting in its place the department at Washington—the other, reducing the army in the presence of the enemy, while he was doubling his own—are quite sufficient without seeking other causes for it. They cost and will cost us millions of treasure and tens of thousands of lives." [4]

This prediction made in 1862 was more than verified. He might have truly said $2,700,000,000 of treasure and half a million lives. Surely the demons of malice had exhausted their spleen upon McClellan. The lack of naval aid meant a long siege of Yorktown, as he had pointed out would be the case in the letter of March 19th, and an opportunity for the enemy to gather their forces from every quarter. If he could have kept his plans concealed, he would have landed at Urbanna, avoided all the difficulties of the Peninsula, and interposed between Richmond and Johnston while the latter was still at Manassas; and now all that he strove to avoid would be charged to himself.

The supreme blow was about to fall. On the 4th of April

[4] Headley, *Great Rebellion*, 459, 460.

he was officially notified that practically one-third of his army, already too much reduced, would be retained at Washington for the defense of that city.

In other words, to the force of more than 83,000 men in Washington and Northern Virginia easily available for its defense General McDowell's corps of 40,000 men was now added, reducing the army which was to be 156,000 to 96,000, of which only about 85,000 were available as soldiers.

As to the retention of McDowell's corps, Mr. Headley says: "The time for apportioning the tremendous amount of guilt that belongs somewhere has not yet come. The outline of the plan sketched above is not given to settle this, but to show that the stupendous failure that followed was inevitable —and that the mad attempt of moving unsupported on Richmond, with only a little over a hundred thousand men was never contemplated by McClellan or his fellow commanders." [5]

Mr. Headley very forcibly adds and the italics are his: "The truth can be told in a few words: *McClellan never proposed or promised to take Richmond with the forces given him.*" [6] He was right, for the experience of every other commander shows that it was not possible.

"The government tried an experiment in this campaign which we believe no other government ever dared to make. Having an army of over two hundred thousand men, designed to act against a common center, Richmond—and thus occupy in fact one great battlefield—it divided it up into independent corps with no commander in chief to direct the movements of the whole except the Secretary of War, who knew less of military science than any regular colonel in the field. . . . It was one of the most stupendous blunders ever committed by a great nation." [7]

I have drawn freely from Mr. Headley's history because it was written at this very time, and so shows us better than any other the people's views of the events we are narrating.

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[5] Headley, *Great Rebellion*, 384.
[6] *Ibid.*, 421.
[7] *Ibid.*

The first volume of his book was published November 1, 1862.

Mr. Swinton censures the Administration very strongly: "When Mr. Lincoln saw the Army of the Potomac carried away in ships out of his sight, and learnt that hardly twenty thousand men had been left in the works of Washington (though above thrice that number was within call), it is not difficult to understand how he should have become nervous as to the safety of the national capital, and, so feeling, should have retained the corps of McDowell to guard it. In this he acted from what may be called the common-sense view of the matter. But in war, as in the domain of science, the truth often transcends, and even contradicts, common sense. It required more than common sense, it required the intuition of the true secret of war, to know that the twenty-five thousand men under General McDowell would really avail more for the defence of the capital, if added to the Army of the Potomac on the Peninsula, thus enabling that army to push vigorously its offensive intent, than if actually held in front of Washington. This Mr. Lincoln neither knew nor could be expected to know; and it is precisely because the principles that govern military affairs are peculiar and of a professional nature, that the interference of civilians in the war-councils of a nation must commonly be disastrous. The President, who found himself by virtue of his office made commander-in-chief of all the forces of the United States, and who had, since the supersession of McClellan as general-in-chief, assumed a species of general direction of the war, had passed his life in the arena of politics; and he brought the habits of a politician to affairs in which, unfortunately, their intrusion can only result in a confusion of all just relations. This antagonism between the maxims that govern politics and those that govern military affairs, is strikingly illustrated in a sentence of one of Mr. Lincoln's dispatches to General McClellan about this time. Referring to McClellan's repeated requests that McDowell's force should be sent him, the President says: 'I shall aid you all I can *consistently with my view of due*

regard to all points.' [8] Nothing could be more naïve than this statement of Mr. Lincoln's policy of an equable distribution of favors. But while this maxim is just in politics, it is fatal in war, and is precisely that once-honored Austrian principle of 'covering everything, by which one really covers nothing.' War is practical and imperious, and in place of having 'regard to all points,' it neglects many points to accumulate all on the decisive point. The decisive point in the case under discussion was assuredly with the Army of the Potomac confronting the main force of the enemy. The proof of this was not long in declaring itself." [9]

[8] McClellan, *Report*, 106.
[9] Swinton, *Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac*, 104, 105.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE DEFENSE OF WASHINGTON

It is not disputed that the retention of McDowell's corps was the work of Stanton, and the pretext for this crowning act of treachery was that a sufficient garrison had not been left for the defense of Washington.

Never was pretense more shallow or more easily exposed. We have seen how much labor General McClellan had bestowed on the project of making the city secure from attack. "He also strengthened the fortifications at Washington in a way that made their conquest forever afterward a hopeless enterprise." [1] The result was that the Southern leaders never thought of attacking it thereafter, even when in 1864 its capture was easily possible. So McClellan's purpose was perfectly accomplished,—namely, that the Capital could be held safe with a moderate force, thus enabling a larger number to take the field for offensive operations. The full force required to hold the city against assault was 30,000 men, but there was no reason why the Administration should not have kept 50,000 or 60,000 men there, if it had been so desired. Following the feeble "pepper-box" policy, Federal armies were scattered over Northern Virginia. Fremont had an army of 35,000, Banks had 25,000, Shields and Milroy each had an army of 15,000 or 20,000; McDowell had an army of 40,000; Wool had 10,000 men and Dix at Baltimore had an army of 10,000 and Wadsworth had an army of 20,000 in the Capital itself. Moreover, these troops could have been increased to any extent by enlistment. The scattered armies served only as objects of attack, and their reverses were constantly creating terror in Washington. Swinton truly says: "One hardly wishes to inquire by whose crude and fatuous inspiration

[1] Eggleston, *History of the Confederate War*, I, 246.

these things were done . . . these detached columns invited destruction in detail. Not to have taken advantage of such an opportunity would have shown General Johnston to be a tyro in his trade." [2] These forces should have been concentrated and kept in touch with Washington so as to be available for its defense whenever required, so as to be in effect its garrison.

That was the sensible course pursued by the Confederates. No considerable army was ever kept in Richmond; yet no Northern force could touch it without overcoming the full strength of the Army of Virginia. So practically all their military resources were continuously utilized, and no Northern army ever assaulted Richmond. Like Norfolk, it was occupied only when it was abandoned.

Here is in brief the case for Mr. Stanton: just after General McClellan had embarked he sent a communication to the War Department which caused the Secretary great alarm for the Capital; Mr. Stanton at once ordered an investigation and found that there were only 19,022 men left to garrison the city; that this number was wholly insufficient, as a full garrison would require 30,000 men, and the President on his suggestion then issued an order detaining McDowell's corps. One of the surest and simplest methods of detecting a false pretext is to assume its truth, carry the theory out to its logical conclusion, and then compare that conclusion with the actual facts.

It is obviously a very serious matter when a commander has started on a campaign, and is already in front of the enemy, to deprive him of a third of his army. Only the clearest and most pressing necessity could excuse such a course. Such a necessity, we are told, existed in the form of a dangerously insufficient garrison to utilize properly the widely separated and extended fortifications of the National capital; some of which, we are told, would have been entirely empty. So the corps of General McDowell was retained. Apparently, the alleged shortage in the garrison was about 11,000 men. What was the sequel of that retention? Logically and surely

[2] *Army of the Potomac*, 123.

in theory it would have been this, that immediately after the order detaining McDowell another order would have been issued, detaching 11,000 men from that corps and adding them to the force under General Wadsworth, to make the garrison complete.

No such order was ever made. It does not appear that a regiment, a company, or a man of that corps was ever added to the garrison. This fact alone demonstrates beyond any doubt the insincerity and falsity of Stanton's pretense. But further demonstration is not wanting. Mr. Stanton, being a zealous patriot and wishing to do what he could to aid the cause of the Union, would have regretted the necessity of needlessly detaining a single man from McClellan's command, and so would surely have kept as few as possible; and as 11,000 at most were needed to bring the garrison up to its full strength, then if this purpose were his only one, he would not have detained 40,000 men to accomplish it. He would have withheld only the lacking number and sent the rest on to Fortress Monroe.

But that is not all. We come now to a point where the gullibility of many writers is simply ludicrous,—namely, the indignant amazement of Mr. Stanton when he learned, after McClellan had already reached the Peninsula, of the perilous weakness of the garrison. The commander of the Army of the Potomac is to these writers a thief slipping off in the darkness, with his master's jewels concealed on his person. He was stealing away and leaving an insufficient garrison. But the faithful watchdog of the Capital discovered his fell design just in time to foil it.

It follows, then, from this that Mr. Stanton knew nothing of the numbers to go and to stay, and but for McClellan's report would have discovered too late the actual state of affairs. Indeed it takes supreme faith to close one's eyes and mind and gulp this down; but many have done so.

Any one who knows anything about military affairs is aware that there is no bookkeeping so punctilious as that of an army. The muster rolls, attendances at drills, maneuvers, absences, and so on are carefully noted. Where are these

records kept? Those of a state militia are in the custody of the adjutant-general; those of the Federal armies, in the custody of the War Department. Here also the executive officer is called the adjutant-general, but he is no more than an aide to the Secretary of War. The same methods are used with respect to arms and ammunition issued and to money paid to soldiers and officers.

If an experienced writer wished in time of war to ascertain the strength of our various forces in the field, where would he go? To the Secretary of War. There he would get the desired information immediately, if the Government was willing.

It appears, accordingly, that at this very time Mr. Stanton caused a tabulated statement of the strength of the Army of the Potomac to be made up from his office records by his clerks.[3] So the pretext that the Secretary found alarming news of the state of Washington from McClellan's letter is incredible.

[3] Flower, *Edwin McMasters Stanton*, 352.

CHAPTER XXV

THE DEFENSE OF WASHINGTON CONTINUED

Let us assume that in fact 11,000 more troops were imperatively needed in Washington, and that McDowell had gone to the Peninsula. Fremont had 35,000 men and Banks had 15,000 or 20,000, and Dix 10,000. Is it not evident that rather than enfeeble the main campaign, Banks's army should have been taken into Washington or kept so near as to be always available? As was repeatedly proven later, the surest way of securing Washington from annoyance by the enemy was to put Richmond in danger. This lesson should have been learned when without a shot having been fired the mere anticipation of McClellan's advance by the coast route had cleared the Potomac and the vicinity of Washington of the enemy.

Knowing at all times the disposition and number of the troops, it was Mr. Stanton's business to know how many men would go to the Peninsula and therefore how many would remain. Being the bookkeeper and auditor of the army, it is certain that he did know, but it is specially obvious here, for the transportation of the troops had to be provided for under the order of February 27th, and this was in fact managed by the Assistant Secretary of War, Mr. Tucker. To convey a regiment to Fortress Monroe was one thing; to convey 146,000 men was quite a different thing. So the great fact for Mr. Tucker,—in other words, for the War Department,—to know was: for how many transportation must be provided.

The pretext of surprise and the want of knowledge are therefore frivolous and transparently false.

It is clear that McDowell's corps was needlessly withdrawn, and as the alleged reason was the weakness of the

garrison, and as the garrison was not enlarged, it is equally clear that Stanton knew that the retention was needless; and this view is strengthened by the retention of a whole corps of 40,000 or more, in order to fill up the garrison to its full quota with 11,000 men, none of whom were ever added to it.

The assigned reason for the withholding of McDowell's corps being false and the natural consequences being so serious to the lives of men and the cause of the Union, the natural suspicion arises that the action was dictated by a fearful malice and designed at any cost to destroy every chance of success. This is in harmony with the treatment of McClellan as a whole after Stanton's advent into office; for in the brusque, undignified, contemptuous, and indeed disgraceful conduct of the nation's representatives, in the total absence of the most ordinary amenities of social and official life in dealing with General McClellan, we seem to have constantly before us, despite all his craftiness and concealment, the disagreeable and rasping personality of Mr. Stanton.

The retention of McDowell's corps was just such another act as that of pushing the inadequate army out into the rain and the swamps in the midst of a severe winter; an act of the highest turpitude and possessing all the moral guilt of treason, since its purpose must have been the defeat of the army and the useless sacrifice of thousands of men battling loyally for the Union. We have already learned from his co-secretaries, Mr. Chase and Mr. Welles, whence the sinister inspiration came,—namely, from Stanton's hatred and his determination to get rid of McClellan. "Thus within four days, the commander who had left the National Capital authorized to execute a definite campaign with certain prescribed means and vested with the control of the forces, communications and supplies upon which he had planned for success, found himself suddenly shorn of every element of necessary strength and reduced to the hazardous military necessity of a radical alteration of his plans while in contact with the enemy." [1]

[1] Powell, *Fifth Army Corps*, 40.

The reason given at the time for McDowell's retention was an insufficient garrison at Washington. Later Mr. Stanton in a letter to Mr. Dyer [2] gave a reason which did no credit to his astuteness,—namely, that McClellan did not need this corps and could not use it. But Mr. Lincoln put it on the ground of an insufficient security for Washington.[3]

The real reason is obvious. It was a return in bad faith, in spite of all that had been done; in spite of councils of generals and pretended assent to the overland route; and on this line McDowell was at once started off. It should be remembered above all that there was no reason why the Government should not have had 100,000 men to garrison Washington. That rested entirely with the War Department. McClellan had nothing to do with it. The Army of the Potomac should not have been sent off until troops in abundance to satisfy the administration had been gathered for the safety of the Capital. If there was not a sufficient garrison on the 1st of April, independent of the army of operations, then the Government was not yet ready to have the Army of the Potomac advance; and the army should not have been sent away until the garrison was sufficiently strengthened to remove all uneasiness and all possibility of future panic. There was no obstacle in the way, for the men who feared and the men who had the power to collect troops were the same. Very few writers fail to condemn these acts of the Administration, yet many are blind to their full significance and effect, and do not recognize the conclusions which irresistibly flow from them. They censure the government for these acts, yet they censure McClellan for the result of the acts.

Mr. Formby says: "McClellan's main idea had always been to place the capital beyond the danger of a sudden *coup de main* by creating a system of strong defensive lines, in which a sufficient garrison would give a feeling of political and civil security, leaving the whole of the mobile army free for offensive operations, but unfortunately there was no point in which the fears of the politicians hampered the conditions

[2] Flower, *Edwin McMasters Stanton*, 60.
[3] Letters, II, 252, 253.

of the war more than in this, for no strength of line or garrison could mitigate their panicky terror when a raid was threatened, but they must insist on diverting an army from its proper work, even if the success of an important campaign were jeopardized thereby." [4]

[4] *American Civil War*, 108.

CHAPTER XXVI

APPALLING OBSTACLES

To have a clear understanding of the campaign in the Peninsula, it is necessary to keep constantly in view all the disheartening interferences with McClellan's plan, from the appearance of Stanton until McClellan found himself on the Peninsula with less than two-thirds of the force on which he had based his calculations.

There was, then: First, the failure to enlist an army adequate to the task of crushing the rebel forces gathered and gathering in Virginia. Second, the enforced opening of operations in that swampy region in the midst of a season of rain so heavy and incessant as to keep the country soaked and miry throughout the whole campaign and, without excuse or necessity, forcing the army to start "forty-six days earlier than the campaigns of either 1863 or 1864 were opened." [1] Third, the withdrawal from McClellan's already inadequate force, under political pressure, of the important division of Blenker,—10,000. Fourth, the lack of naval assistance although his own approbation of the route to be taken and the endorsement of it by the council of generals rested as an indispensable condition upon the active and militant cooperation of the navy. This was neither provided for nor was McClellan ever notified before he started that he would not have it, and he had every reason to expect it. Fifth, McClellan deemed it conducive to his success that the forces of the nation should everywhere move at the same time, so that the rebels could not concentrate on him from all the South. He deemed it still more essential that he should have entire control of all the forces in Virginia. By a series of orders

[1] Powell, *History of the Fifth Army Corps*, 38.

all control except of the Peninsular army was wrested from him. Sixth, ten thousand men from Fortress Monroe were to join his army. This arrangement was not only rescinded but Fortress Monroe, his base, was removed from his command. Seventh, McDowell's fine corps of 40,000 men had a special function,—namely, to accelerate McClellan's advance by landing beyond Gloucester Point and so making Yorktown untenable. Of this he was deprived, cutting off a third of his expected force. Eighth, the concentration of the enemy in his front was due to his enforced revelation of his plans. If he had been allowed to keep them concealed, he would have landed his army at Urbanna and interposed it between Johnston and Richmond before the latter had left Manassas. Ninth, finally the discontinuance of the recruiting offices was especially vexatious and hostile, in view of the depletion of the army through the withdrawal of Blenker and McDowell.

It was useless for McClellan to close his eyes to the fact that there was a foe behind him even more dangerous than the foe in front. An intent to make success impossible for him was evident. No plausible reason for this apparently intense hostility was ever offered; no intimation was given in advance; no consultation was ever held; no explanation of a supposed necessity for these proceedings was ever offered, and, worst of all, after events proved that he was right, no regret was ever expressed. No soothing word of sympathy or encouragement was ever tendered. The manner of the performance of the foe behind him was contemptuous, rasping, galling, brutal, and exasperating; and this aids us in discovering its meaning and purpose. We can now better appreciate the obstacles presented by the field of operations and the forces of the enemy. If General McClellan had been able to keep his plans secret and had landed at Urbanna while Johnston, not divining his intent, was still at Manassas, and if his landing had been in midsummer, with every condition of ground and weather favorable, still, with an army so diminished and inadequate as that which landed upon the Peninsula, the enterprise would have been hazardous in view of the numbers and fighting qualities of the Southerners,

stimulated and inspired as they were by the sentiment that they were battling on their own soil.

Or if McClellan could have gone directly to the James and established his army close to Richmond at the outset as he wished, still, with a force so diminished, success would have been imperiled, until his army had been sufficiently enlarged to meet Lee's forces at least on equal terms. Only a circumstance hereafter to be noted afforded any hope of success.

He was so beset with obstacles at the time of which we speak that all hope of success would have seemed clearly vain but for the promise of Stanton now given that McDowell would join him near Richmond.[2] The new conditions imperatively required a slow and cautious advance in the absence of naval aid and a flanking force; and in this conclusion the hostile attitude of the War Department was a potent factor. McClellan realized now that Mr. Stanton's opposition to the coast route and to himself as its exponent and advocate had reached a degree which was in effect traitorous. To ruin McClellan for opposing him, he wanted the expedition to fail. To prove that the coast route was a blunder he was willing for the army to be destroyed. So McClellan felt, and he could take no risk. He must be careful, circumspect, sure.

To all the elements of discouragement already mentioned an additional one in the shape of a formidable natural obstacle now presented itself. The Warwick River was shown on the government map as running from north to south, nearly parallel to the James and close to the western line of the Peninsula. This would afford a favorable territory for swiftly turning and investing Yorktown. But, to McClellan's surprise and dismay, it was now seen that the Warwick ran almost due west, practically from the very walls of Yorktown to the James, and the strong defensive works of Yorktown extended to its banks. "From its head to Lee's Mill the Warwick was flooded by means of artificial inundations which rendered it unfordable. The dams constructed for this purpose were all covered by strong works so situated as to be unassailable

[2] Headley, *Great Rebellion*, I, 384.

until their artillery fire was reduced. Below Lee's Mill the river was a tidal stream, not fordable at any stage of the tide. That portion of the river, moreover, was controlled by the fire of the Confederate gunboats in the James River. The valley of the Warwick was generally low and swampy; the approaches to the dams were through dense forests and deep swamps, and every precaution had been taken by the enemy, in the way of falling timber and constructing works to make a crossing as difficult as possible." [3]

General Barnard in his report of May 6th expressed his recognition of these natural barriers in equally forcible terms, adding: "If we could have broken the enemy's line across the isthmus, we could have invested Yorktown, and it must, with its garrison, have soon fallen into our hands. It was not deemed practicable to do so."

The defenses of Yorktown were in themselves very formidable. Two thousand negroes had been employed upon them for a year, and they were considered impregnable by General Johnston.[4]

"The fortifications of this place extended entirely across the Peninsula from the York to the James and at either extremity were protected by batteries of immense strength. Special attention had been given to them by the rebels from the outset of the war. They knew it was the most direct route to Richmond, and hence had made them, as they supposed, impregnable. Mounted with heavy guns, fronted with rifle pits and easy of access to the whole rebel force in Virginia, they presented a most formidable appearance." [5]

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[3] McClellan, *Own Story*, 272.
[4] Ellis, *United States*, III, 980.
[5] Headley, *Great Rebellion*, I, 380.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE STRENGTH OF THE ENEMY

By what forces were these obstacles, natural and artificial, backed up? Many writers, with a singular and tireless perversity, insist on the baseless statement that McClellan with over 120,000 men was opposed by Magruder with only 15,000 men. When General McClellan reached the Warwick he had less than 40,000 men available for attack.[1] But it is the force of the enemy that we are concerned with here. While General Johnston was still at Manassas there were 15,000 men at Yorktown, and 15,000 more from Norfolk joined them. This force of 30,000 was under General Magruder.[2] On January 10th, 1862, when Generals McDowell and Franklin waited on the President at his request, "The Secretary of State gave the substance of some information he considered reliable . . . to the effect that the enemy had 20,000 men under Huger at Norfolk; 30,000 at Centreville; and in all in our front, an effective force, capable of being brought up at short notice, of about 103,000 men." [3]

On March 9th Johnston left Manassas, to go where? Obviously to intercept McClellan, of whose movements and of all other matters in Washington he was well advised. "General Johnston interpreted McClellan's designs aright and was transporting his army to the peninsula East of Richmond to meet his adversary's confidently expected advance in that quarter." [4] General Johnston himself gives this testimony: "I did not doubt that this route would be taken by General McClellan, as it would be most difficult to meet. I moved to

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 279.
[2] *Battles and Leaders*, II, 202.
[3] Swinton, *Army of the Potomac*, 80.
[4] Eggleston, *History of the Confederate War*, I, 353.

be ready for it, as well as to unite with any Confederate forces that might be sent to oppose him, should the movement by the Lower Rappahannock or Fort Monroe be adopted." [5] So when Johnston and Magruder had united, not only had they a great advantage in their position behind the forts and redoubts from Yorktown to the James and the morasses of the Warwick, but they had the advantage of superior effective numbers also; but that was not all. The states farther south were very little harassed at that time and troops were being rushed into Virginia from them all, with a result to be shown later. I am astonished at the silence of authors generally as to another circumstance of the greatest moment in judging of the force of the enemy and the wisdom of McClellan's movements. As soon as the Peninsular plan of campaign was settled upon in Washington, it appears that "The governor of Virginia called out the whole militia of his state estimated to amount to 100,000 men. The governor had previously taken steps to push enlistments of troops and under the influence of all of this action, the reorganization of the army went on with a vigor and heartiness of spirit that resulted in an earnest and efficient body. When McClellan at last allowed his men to fight, he had to contend with a large army under Johnston and Lee, increased by resolute free recruits yet with enough of the leaven of disciplined soldiers to maneuver and fight like veterans." [6]

Mr. Formby relates that "Johnston's movement at exactly the right time to the south bank of the Rappahannock caused the base to be changed to Fort Monroe on the Peninsula, which gave the Confederates time to forestall McClellan there and make him fight his way." [7]

The Baltimore *American,* of April 9th, 1862, announced that "Our military authorities have reliable information that Magruder's force up to last night was 60,000 and still being reinforced."

On March 18th, when the first Union troops arrived on

[5] Johnston, *Narrative,* 25.
[6] *Richmond Examiner,* March 12, 1862.
[7] *Civil War,* 107, 108; Rhodes, *History of the United States,* III, 607.

the Peninsula, it may be that Magruder had a comparatively small force on the Warwick, but through his excellent information bureau, of which we have learned, General Johnston knew that the commander of the Union Army was still in Washington, that the shipment of the army would occupy two weeks, and that of course the army would not advance until it was all assembled on the Peninsula, as it would be supreme folly to send on a vanguard to be overwhelmed by superior forces. In a few days, and long before the Federal forces were all landed, Johnston had joined Magruder.

In view of all this, only the most rabid type of political fanaticism or absolute ignorance of easily accessible and undisputed facts can account for the statement that McClellan was confronted with only 11,000 or 15,000 men, or, as a few say, 5,000. However, the statement, having been made by many, has with astonishing gullibility and lack of sagacity and inquiry been accepted by many more, who have erected upon it a great superstructure of false and absurd conclusions. Assuming that the enemy had only 15,000 men and that McClellan had 120,000 to hurl upon them, the conclusion was then easily drawn that McClellan was timid, fearful, lacking in energy and aggressiveness, and prone to gross and ridiculous exaggerations of the enemy's strength; and this conclusion then became a source of erroneous opinions as to the prior and subsequent acts of the commander. The actual facts being approximately known as above stated, we discover that the reports of the secret service department were substantially correct. From these reports, the Confederate forces in Virginia on March the 17th amounted to 150,000; from April the 7th to May the 3d (in the Peninsula), to from 100,000 to 120,000, "at a low estimate." Certain writers repeatedly allude to McClellan's "absurd and preposterous overestimation of the foe," but they do not mention, nor does the most industrious and careful search reveal a single case where he made any estimation of the foe. He acted upon official advices. The Government relied upon and acted upon the same advices. Allan Pinkerton, who was in charge of that

department, stoutly asserted and defended the accuracy of the reports more than twenty years later.

General Webb, a biased critic, admits that General McClellan was bound to act upon these official advices.[8] All the general officers of the Army of the Potomac were averse to an attempt to force the passage of the Warwick or to a direct attack upon the formidable defenses of Yorktown. We are told that "the Grant of Donelson" would not have been delayed by the morasses of the Warwick nor by the handful of Confederates behind it, but this view does little credit to the shrewdness and sagacity of the final leader of the Army of the Potomac. From a thoughtful study of his bent of mind, I feel sure that General Grant would never have found it necessary to enter upon the consideration of so hazardous an enterprise. In the first place, even if he had been sure it was the best route, he would have abandoned the project, as he did abandon it two years later, to avoid the displeasure and to secure the approbation of the President and the War Department. In the next place, if by misapprehension he had found himself at Fortress Monroe denuded of more than one-third of his expected force, stripped of the cooperation of the navy, and with the expedition thus robbed of every reasonable hope of success, I am sure he would at once have rushed back to Washington and have had a heart-to-heart talk with the President. He would have made Mr. Lincoln understand the virtual treason of the attitude of the Administration and that, as the head of the Government, the President could not hope to escape all the blame, no matter how little he was personally responsible, and he would have convinced him that to advance with a force so inadequate for its purpose was to ensure its destruction. He would have convinced him that the only sane course was to bring an array of war vessels, as he should have done before, to open the York and James Rivers, and at the same time to resume enlistments, hurry enough men into the Capital to give confidence to the weak hearts who ruled it, and then forward McDowell's men and as many more as could be spared to carry out the commander's plan in con-

[8] *The Peninsula*, 181.

junction with the navy. As he and Lincoln were both Westerners, of similar modes of thought and of nearly the same age, he would no doubt have won the President over to his views; and if he had not, he would have considered the campaign hopelessly lost because of the bad faith of the Government, and would have abandoned it and taken the overland route.

A letter of General Keyes, one of the corps commanders, throws so much light upon the condition of affairs at this time that it should receive the most careful consideration of the reader.

"HEADQUARTERS, 4TH CORPS,
"WARWICK COURT-HOUSE, VA.,
"April 7, 1862.

"MY DEAR SENATOR: The plan of campaign on this line was made with the distinct understanding that four army corps should be employed, and that the navy should co-operate in the taking of Yorktown, and also (as I understood it) support us on our left by moving gunboats up James river.

"To-day I have learned that the 1st corps, which by the President's order was to embrace four divisions, and one division (Blenker's) of the 2d corps, have been withdrawn altogether from this line of operations and from the Army of the Potomac. At the same time, as I am informed, the navy has not the means to attack Yorktown, and is afraid to send gunboats up James river for fear of the *Merrimac*.

"The above plan of campaign was adopted unanimously by Maj.-Gen. McDowell and Brig.-Gens. Sumner, Heintzelman, and Keyes, and was concurred in by Maj.-Gen. McClellan, who first proposed Urbanna as our base.

"This army being reduced by forty-five thousand troops, some of them among the best in the service, and without the support of the navy, the plan to which we are reduced bears scarcely any resemblance to the one I voted for.

"I command the James river column, and I left my camp near Newport News the morning of the 4th instant. I only succeeded in getting my artillery ashore the afternoon of the

day before, and one of my divisions had not all arrived in camp the day I left, and for the want of transportation has not yet joined me. So you will observe that not a day was lost in the advance, and in fact we marched so quickly and so rapidly that many of our animals were twenty-four and forty-eight hours without a ration of forage. But, notwithstanding the rapidity of our advance, we were stopped by a line of defense nine or ten miles long, strongly fortified by breastworks, erected nearly the whole distance behind a stream or succession of ponds, nowhere fordable, one terminus being Yorktown and the other ending in the James river, which is commanded by the enemy's gunboats. Yorktown is fortified all around with bastioned works, and on the waterside it and Gloucester are so strong that the navy are afraid to attack either.

"The approaches on one side are generally through low, swampy, or thickly wooded ground, over roads which we are obliged to repair or to make before we can get forward our carriages. The enemy is in great force, and is constantly receiving reinforcements from the two rivers. The line in front of us is therefore one of the strongest ever opposed to an invading force in any country.

"You will, then, ask why I advocated such a line for our operations? My reasons are few, but, I think, good.

"With proper assistance from the navy we could take Yorktown, and then with gunboats on both rivers we could beat any force opposed to us on Warwick river, because the shot and shell from the gunboats would nearly overlap across the Peninsula; so that if the enemy should retreat—and retreat he must—he would have a long way to go without rail or steam transportation, and every soul of his army must fall into our hands or be destroyed.

"Another reason for my supporting the new base and plan was that this line, it was expected, would furnish water transportation nearly to Richmond.

"Now, supposing we succeed in breaking through the line in front of us, what can we do next? The roads are very bad, and if the enemy retains command of James river, and

we do not first reduce Yorktown, it would be impossible for us to subsist this army three marches beyond where it is now. As the roads are at present, it is with the utmost difficulty that we can subsist it in the position it now occupies.

"You will see, therefore, by what I have said, that the force originally intended for the capture of Richmond should be all sent forward. If I thought the four army corps necessary when I supposed the navy would co-operate, and when I judged of the obstacles to be encountered by what I learned from maps and the opinions of officers long stationed at Fort Monroe, and from all other sources, how much more should I think the full complement of troops requisite now that the navy cannot co-operate, and now that the strength of the enemy's line and the number of his guns and men prove to be almost immeasurably greater than I had been led to expect! The line in front of us, in the opinion of all military men here who are at all competent to judge, is one of the strongest in the world, and the force of the enemy capable of being increased beyond the numbers we now have to oppose to him. Independently of the strength of the lines in front of us, and of the force of the enemy behind them, we cannot advance until we get command of either York river or James river. The efficient co-operation of the navy is, therefore, absolutely essential, and so I considered it when I voted to change our base from the Potomac to Fort Monroe.

"An iron-clad boat must attack Yorktown; and if several strong gunboats could be sent up James river also, our success will be certain and complete, and the rebellion will soon be put down.

"On the other hand, we must butt against the enemy's works with heavy artillery and a great waste of time, life, and material.

"If we break through an advance, both our flanks will be assailed from two great watercourses in the hands of the enemy; our supplies would give out, and the enemy, equal, if not superior, in numbers, would, with the other advantages, beat and destroy this army.

"The greatest master of the art of war has said that 'if

you would invade a country successfully, you must have one line of operations and one army, under one general.' But what is our condition? The State of Virginia is made to constitute the command, in part or wholly, of some six generals, viz.: Fremont, Banks, McDowell, Wool, Burnside, and McClellan, besides the scrap, over the Chesapeake, in the care of Dix.

"The great battle of the war is to come off here. If we win it the rebellion will be crushed. If we lose it the consequences will be more horrible than I care to foretell. The plan of campaign I voted for, if carried out with the means proposed, will certainly succeed. If any part of the means proposed are withheld or diverted, I deem it due to myself to say that our success will be uncertain.

"It is no doubt agreeable to the commander of the 1st corps to have a separate department, and, as this letter advocates his return to Gen. McClellan's command, it is proper to state that I am not at all influenced by personal regard or dislike to any of my seniors in rank. If I were to credit all the opinions which have been poured into my ears, I must believe that, in regard to my present fine command, I owe much to Gen. McDowell and nothing to Gen. McClellan. But I have disregarded all such officiousness, and I have from last July to the present day supported Gen. McClellan and obeyed all his orders with as hearty a good-will as though he had been my brother or the friend to whom I owed most. I shall continue to do so to the last and so long as he is my commander, and I am not desirous to displace him, and would not if I could. He left Washington with the understanding that he was to execute a definite plan of campaign with certain prescribed means. The plan was good and the means sufficient, and, without modification, the enterprise was certain of success. But, with the reduction of force and means, the plan is entirely changed, and is now a bad plan, with means insufficient for certain success.

"Do not look upon this communication as the offspring of despondency. I never despond; and when you see me working

the hardest you may be sure that fortune is frowning upon me. I am working now to my utmost.

"Please show this letter to the President, and I should like also that Mr. Stanton should know its contents. Do me the honor to write to me as soon as you can, and believe me, with perfect respect,

"Your most obedient servant,

"E. D. KEYES,

"Brig.-Gen. Commanding 4th Army Corps.

"HON. IRA HARRIS,

"U. S. SENATE."

CHAPTER XXVIII

EXASPERATING TREATMENT

General McClellan says of his situation at this time: "Thus, instead of operating with an army of 156,000 men under my immediate command, with control of all the forces, supplies and operations from the Atlantic to the Alleghanies, and from the North Carolina line to New York, I was reduced to 85,000 men (effectives) and a little strip of ground. My bases of operations at Washington and Fortress Monroe were both removed from my control and I remained simply with my 85,000 men and not even (in control of) the ground they occupied until I passed beyond White House. Add to this consideration that I had now only too good reason to feel assured that the administration, and especially the Secretary of War, were inimical to me and did not desire my success, and some conception may be formed of the weight upon my mind at the time when whatever hopefulness and vigor I possessed were fully needed to overcome the difficulties in my path." [1]

The very object and essential functions of the War Department make it inconceivable that any unforeseen emergency should have compelled the retention of McDowell's corps,—a third of the army. But let us assume that the retention was actually unforeseen and unavoidable; then it seems to me clear that its effect was to make the campaign so obviously perilous that the same order which detached McDowell's corps should have directed the army to remain at Fortress Monroe until, through the arrival of sufficient new levies, the detached troops could be forwarded.

Having blundered in forcing McClellan into the bogs of the Peninsula in a most inclement season and long before the

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 241.

administration had gathered a sufficient force to send forth an adequate invading army, if they had been sincere and acting in entirely good faith, the ruling powers would have sympathized with the crippled condition in which they had put him; and, knowing from their daily advices of the great and rapidly increasing strength of the enemy, they would have been most anxious for the safety of his army, and would have urged him to avoid every risk until he could be sufficiently strengthened to accord some reasonable prospect of success in a forward movement.

But in no point of McClellan's military career does the culpable and unpatriotic attitude of the Administration more strikingly appear than here. The inadequacy of his force, the lack of naval cooperation, the constant downpour, the morasses, the intrenched and booming Warwick, the formidable works of Yorktown, and the incomplete transfer of even the two-thirds of the army still allowed to McClellan were all more than ignored; for he was insolently goaded on when less than 50,000 effectives had arrived, as if he had ideal weather, roads of adamant, a clear, dry, firm plain to operate upon, no obstacle save an inconsiderable force of the enemy in front, and at his command the full army and equipment he had originally requested.

Nothing but McClellan's intense patriotism and military ardor,—his desire to be of service to his country,—kept him from resigning. The situation proves incontestably that the commander was wholly wanting in the arts and crafts of the politician. All experienced politicians, I am sure, will agree that if he had been versed in such matters he would have recognized that his campaign was absolutely and permanently blocked by the hostility of the Government, unless he could change their attitude into one of warm support.

And he would have recognized also that the tools to accomplish this laudable object were in his own hands. He would have appreciated how potent a factor in his vexations was the timidity of the insolent civilians. He would have realized that that man in Washington with the dagger in his vest was afraid of his own shadow, afraid of the foe,

but afraid too of the presence of the army and its commander in the city, and that he was feverishly eager to start them off and delighted when they were gone. He would have known too that it was merely a phase of this timidity which prevented the President, influenced by Stanton, from throwing him out,—that it was the fear of public indignation only which stayed the official hand. The generals had endorsed him. To remove him then would have been too daring a performance. It were better to gain the purpose furtively and gradually. And, observing this panicky terror of many things, McClellan would have used his knowledge for his own protection and his country's welfare. It was a prime opportunity.

He would have written a letter stating without heat or comment the long array of facts demonstrating the personal enmity of Mr. Stanton and Mr. Lincoln, and at the same time showing the wisdom of his own course; he would have declined to take part in the slaughter of his soldiers, which he would have pointed out would certainly ensue if the proposed campaign were persisted in, and he would have tendered his resignation, for the sake of his army, that the Government might select a leader who would enjoy the friendship and cordial support of the Administration. He would have had this letter reach Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York on the same day that it reached Washington, in order that it might appear with flaming headlines in the press of the country the next morning, before any action could have been taken upon the resignation; and it would have raised such an outcry of indignation, because of its calm marshaling of indisputable facts, and would have so imperiled the political fortunes of those who were doing more harm to the Union than were all the armies of Dixie, that those who know the game will agree that in all reasonable probability his enemies in Washington would no longer have regarded General McClellan as an easy and helpless victim, but would have felt it imperative to satisfy and pacify him, to secure the withdrawal of his resignation, and to induce him to make a public announcement that the relations between him and them had

been amicably adjusted. But the more one is convinced of his rare military talent, the more evident is his inexperience, which the Comte de Paris noted, in dealing with crafty men.

We can easily imagine the air of the Peninsula becoming misty with imprecations if General Sheridan or General Sherman or even the cooler General Grant had been in McClellan's shoes when he received the following appreciative and consoling letter from the President: "I suppose the whole force which has gone forward to you is with you by this time, and if so I think it is the precise time for you to strike a blow. By delay the enemy will steadily gain on you; that is, he will gain faster by fortifications and reinforcements than you by reinforcements alone. And once more let me tell you, it is indispensable to you that you strike a blow. I am powerless to help this. You will do me the justice to remember that I always insisted that going down the bay in search of a field instead of fighting at or near Manassas, was only shifting and not surmounting a difficulty; that we would find the same enemy and the same or equal entrenchments at either place. The country will not fail to note, is now noting, that the present hesitation to move upon an entrenched enemy is but the story of Manassas repeated. I beg to assure you. . . . But you must act." [2]

This letter is an exhibition of flagrant and indefensible insolence. No letter of Mr. Lincoln's ever did him so little credit, but of course it came from Stanton's instigation. To appreciate its folly, one must bear in mind the unanimity of the best military authorities in approving of McClellan's plan of campaign. One should also bear in mind the apparent treachery of the Administration in depriving him of control of the entire field of operations, such as General Grant had later, and in robbing him of one-third of his army and of the indispensable aid of the navy, thus crippling and enfeebling him in such a way as to compel a delay. He had predicted that if naval aid were not supplied delay would be inevitable, and because of it he was chafing like a caged tiger.

[2] McClellan, *Own Story*, 276.

If there was ever a time when provocation could make profanity commendable it was then. The situation demanded from the Government a letter of apology for not having done its part, a letter of regret and of sympathy, instead of which the situation was treated as demonstrating the folly of the coast plan, and the commander was treated as if there was no reason in the world save cowardice why he should not have marched straight into Richmond. There are times when patience is mistaken for weakness and invites contempt, and when even prayers must be supplemented by endeavor. When the boat is drifting toward the falls the boatman should take vigorously to his oars, and he should not imagine that the most fervent prayer will be a sufficient substitute.

This letter of Mr. Lincoln's instead of being borne in silence as it apparently was, demanded a hot and caustic response, exposing its injustice and insolence and lodging the responsibility where it rightly belonged. If at this time McClellan had truly measured the deadly malice of Stanton and the necessity for protecting himself and his soldiers, that letter would have received a prompt reply exposing the hand of Stanton, and care would have been taken that both letter and answer should reach the public. Let us suppose that the General had replied to the President in this manner: "Dear Sir: As you are well aware, there has been no hesitation on my part and no lack of activity. That we are not far on our way is due to the act of the Government by which the army, none too large for its purpose when at its full strength, has lost more than one-third of its force and to the fact that the Government has failed to give me the cooperation of the navy, which was an indispensable factor in the plan of campaign. The Warwick and its swamps from Yorktown to the James make an obstacle so impassable that with a much smaller force than I now have I would confidently engage to destroy the whole rebel army in Virginia, if it should attempt to cross it.

"As your official advices assure you, the Confederate forces are already superior to ours and are constantly increasing. To attempt to cross the flooded Warwick under present

circumstances would, in my opinion, be a foolhardy enterprise—one doomed to inevitable failure.

"If the attempt is made, it must be upon your imperative order, leaving me no discretion. The army and its officers will do their best, and they will acquit themselves bravely, but beyond doubt the result will be an inexcusable slaughter. The army will be destroyed, and you will have to bear the whole blame of the disaster, if you order the advance after having been thus fully informed."

If such a letter had been written, no one who has attentively studied the characters of the President and of Mr. Stanton will believe that Mr. Stanton could have persuaded Mr. Lincoln to take such a responsibility or that Mr. Stanton himself would have dared to take it.

CHAPTER XXIX

M'CLELLAN'S APPEAL—THE SIEGE OF YORKTOWN

No direct answer was made to Mr. Lincoln's letter, and two days later the General requested that Franklin's and McCall's divisions of McDowell's corps should be sent to him, with the result that Franklin's was sent. This was the third appeal for Franklin's corps, the first having been made on the 5th. Although General McClellan made no direct answer to the President's letter, probably because he desired no open war with him, on the 20th of April he wrote the following letter to the Secretary of War, whom he at all times held to be his enemy in the Administration and the author of all hostile communications.[1]

"HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
"BEFORE YORKTOWN,

"HON. E. M. STANTON, Secretary of War:

"SIR: I received to-day a note from Assistant Secretary Watson enclosing an extract from a letter the author of which is not mentioned. I send a copy of the extract with this. I hope that a copy has also been sent to Gen. McDowell, whom it concerns more nearly, perhaps, than it does me.

"At the risk of being thought obtrusive I will venture upon some remarks which perhaps my position does not justify me in making, but which I beg to assure you are induced solely by my intense desire for the success of the government in this struggle.

"You will, I hope, pardon me if I allude to the past, not in captious spirit, but merely so far as may be necessary to explain my own course and my views as to the future.

"From the beginning I had intended, so far as I might have the power to carry out my own views, to abandon the

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 281.

line of Manassas as the line of advance. I ever regarded it as an improper one; my wish was to adopt a new line, based upon the waters of the lower Chesapeake. I always expected to meet with strong opposition on this line, the strongest that the rebels could offer, but I was well aware that upon overcoming this opposition the result would be decisive and pregnant with great results.

"Circumstances, among which I will now only mention the uncertainty as to the power of the *Merrimac,* have compelled me to adopt the present line, as probably safer, though far less brilliant, than that by Urbanna. When the movement was commenced I counted upon an active and disposable force of nearly 150,000 men, and intended to throw a strong column upon West Point either by York river or, if that proved impracticable, by a march from the mouth of the Severn, expecting to turn in that manner all the defenses of the Peninsula. Circumstances have proved that I was right, and that my intended movements would have produced the desired results.

"After the transfer of troops had commenced from Alexandria to Fort Monroe, but before I started in person, the division of Blenker was detached from my command—a loss of near 10,000 men. As soon as the mass of my troops were fairly started I embarked myself. Upon reaching Fort Monroe I learned that the rebels were being rapidly reinforced from Norfolk and Richmond. I therefore determined to lose no time in making the effort to invest Yorktown, without waiting for the arrival of the divisions of Hooker and Richardson and the 1st corps, intending to employ the 1st corps in mass to move upon West Point, reinforcing it as circumstances might render necessary.

"The advance was made on the morning of the second day after I reached Fort Monroe. When the troops reached the immediate vicinity of Yorktown the true nature of the enemy's position was for the first time developed. While my men were under fire I learned that the First Corps was removed from my command. No warning had been given me of this, nor was any reason then assigned. I should also

have mentioned that the evening before I left Fort Monroe I received a telegraphic despatch from the War Department informing me that the order placing Fort Monroe and its dependent troops under my command was rescinded. No reason was given for this, nor has it been to this day. I confess that I have no right to know the reason. This order deprived me of the support of another division which I had been authorized to form for active operations from among the troops near Fort Monroe.

"Thus when I came under fire I found myself weaker by five divisions than I had expected when the movement commenced. It is more than probable that no general was ever placed in such a position before.

"Finding myself thus unexpectedly weakened, and with a powerful enemy strongly entrenched in my front, I was compelled to change my plans and become cautious. Could I have retained my original force I confidently believe that I would now have been in front of Richmond instead of where I now am. The probability is that that city would now have been in our possession.

"But the question now is in regard to the present and the future rather than the past.

"The enemy, by the destruction of the bridges of the Rappahannock, has deprived himself of the means of a rapid advance on Washington. Lee will never venture upon a bold movement on a large scale.

"The troops I left for the defense of Washington, as I fully explained to you in the letter I wrote the day I sailed, are ample for its protection.

"Our true policy is to concentrate our troops on the fewest possible lines of attack; we have now too many, and an enterprising enemy could strike us a severe blow.

"I have every reason to believe that the main portion of the rebel forces are in my front. They are not 'drawing off' their troops from Yorktown.

"Give me McCall's division and I will undertake a movement on West Point which will shake them out of Yorktown. As it is, I will win, but I must not be blamed if success is

delayed. I do not feel that I am answerable for the delay of victory.

"I do not feel authorized to venture upon any suggestions as to the disposition of the troops in other departments, but content myself with stating the least that I regard as essential to prompt success here. If circumstances render it impossible to give what I ask, I still feel sure of success, but more time will be required to achieve the result.

"Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

"GEO. B. McCLELLAN,
"Maj.-Gen. Commanding."

From the moment he set foot on the Peninsula General McClellan kept the War Department fully informed of everything he discovered, and as early as April the 5th the Government learned from him the probable necessity of securing heavy artillery to besiege Yorktown [2] and again on the 7th,[3] and General Keyes in his letter of April 7th to Senator Harris, which he asks him to show to the President (and in a matter so urgent it must be assumed that this was done) the following direct statement is made, "On the other hand we must butt against the enemy's works with heavy artillery and [with] a great waste of time, life, and material." In his letter of March 19th General McClellan had warned the Government of the result to be expected if naval aid were lacking.

Finding himself stopped by the Warwick, with ample and rapidly increasing forces behind it, flanked by the James on one side and the York on the other, and with both rivers in command of the rebels, General McClellan found that the siege of Yorktown was indispensable to his advance. Not until the 16th was his army fully gathered on the Peninsula, and meantime, despite the constant rains, all his plans for the siege were matured: on the 17th the ground was broken for the siege operations, certain heavy guns were ordered, and more than a week later, as through some fault of the authorities they had not arrived, they were again asked for.

[2] McClellan, *Own Story*, 263.
[3] *Ibid.*, 267.

The reply affects to be in total ignorance of the first request, and is in the usual form of governmental apology, as follows: "Your call for Parrott guns from Washington alarms me, chiefly because it argues indefinite procrastination. Is anything to be done?"

The siege works were so well and rapidly and convincingly prosecuted that sixteen days later, on May 3d, just as the bombardment was about to begin Yorktown was, by Lee's advice,[4] abandoned. For a formidable position, this was by far the shortest siege on record. It has no parallel in the annals of the war.

Of General McClellan's energy at this time Mr. Prime says: "While politicians were plotting, McClellan was working. It is impossible to over-estimate the laborious character of the general's life. His whole soul was in his work; his every energy and thought was given to it. He was always, while in Washington and while in the field, in the habit of seeing personally, as far as possible, to the execution of important orders. Out of countless illustrations of this which might be given, let one suffice. The lieutenant-colonel of that superb regiment, the 1st Conn. Artillery, wrote to me from the works before Yorktown that, a little after midnight, the previous rainy night, while the men were at work in the trenches, McClellan rode up, attended by a single orderly, sprang from his horse, inspected the work, gave some directions, remounted, and rode away. About three A. M. he reappeared as before, approved the work, gave further directions, and vanished. My correspondent met him at his headquarters before seven A. M., and also met there a friend, whose regiment was stationed some miles away, who told him that the general had surprised them by a visit and inspection about two A. M. The soldiers soon learned not to be surprised at his appearance among them anywhere, at any hour of day or night." [5]

On evacuating Yorktown the Confederates removed many

[4] Headley, *Great Rebellion*, 404.
[5] McClellan, *Own Story*, 11.

of the guns and replaced them with dummies, as had been done at Manassas.[6]

Still ninety-one guns of various calibers were left.[7] Because of the statement that many guns were carried off and replaced by dummies certain thoughtless writers jump at the conclusion that only dummies were there originally. This shows how deeply they were inoculated with Mr. Stanton's mode of reasoning.

General Barnard claims that during the winter he suggested to General McClellan the wisdom of capturing Norfolk by a special expedition, but McClellan was averse to such petty enterprises, as he felt sure that Norfolk would be abandoned when his advance upon Richmond was fairly under way. How sagacious was his judgment will be seen a little later.

Moreover, Norfolk was a seaport, and if a special expedition against it would have been desirable, such an expedition was work for the navy and much easier work than many of its great exploits during the war.

[6] Pollard, *Lost Cause*, 266.
[7] Headley, *Great Rebellion*, 405.

CHAPTER XXX

UP THE PENINSULA

The most important enterprise of the war was the capture of Richmond. There lay the vitals of the Confederacy. And as the York and James Rivers, which formed the Peninsula, were factors of prime importance in this achievement, a formidable naval force should have been collected and maintained in this section until those rivers were securely in the possession of the Federal Government. There was not the slightest excuse for not doing this, for the necessity of naval action and the consequences of neglecting it were repeatedly urged in General McClellan's communication of November, 1861. On the 8th of March, 1862, the *Merrimac* came down the York River and threw the nation into a state of terror by destroying the *Cumberland* and the *Congress*.

On the 9th of March the *Monitor*, Ericson's new device,—"a cheese box on a raft," as the Confederates called it,—appeared in Hampton Roads. An engagement with the *Merrimac* resulted apparently in a drawn battle, but it ended the offensive career of the latter. Why the *Monitor* was made so little use of thereafter, where aggressive naval action would have counted for so much, is one of the enigmas of the war. No one can read the published diary of the Secretary of the Navy and note the general efficiency of naval action under his administration without feeling assured that the idleness of the *Monitor* was not due to want of energy or of judgment on his part. The record of the navy in the Civil War is a splendid one. It may be said that it was splendid wherever that department had control of the operations. But in the immediate vicinity of Washington the military department was paramount. General McClellan kept the authorities constantly in mind that he needed the cooperation of the

navy.[1] On March 13th it seems he suggested to Secretary Stanton "that the Secretary of the Navy be requested to order to Fort Monroe whatever force Dupont can spare, as well as any available force that Goldborough can send up as soon as his present operations are completed." Mr. Welles, we are told, demurred, unless Norfolk was to be the objective, and no order came from the President to the Secretary of the Navy to supply the aid which McClellan expected and which the council of generals had made a condition of the campaign. The operations of the navy at Island No. 10 and Port Royal and Mobile Bay and New Orleans were highly useful and glorious; but at none of these places was naval action so much needed as it was in the opening of the York and the James. If these measures had received early and adequate attention, there would have been no *Merrimac* and the loss of the *Cumberland* and the *Congress* would have been avoided; when the advance upon Richmond began the army would have advanced by the James River, and the day after leaving Alexandria it would have landed far beyond the Warwick and its swamps, doubtless at Harrison's Landing, in close proximity to the Confederate capital. For McClellan always preferred the James to the York. When he landed on the Peninsula the James was closed to the Federal navy. Sometimes we are saved from the penalty of a blunder merely from the fact that our adversary takes it as assured that what should be done at a certain juncture undoubtedly will be done. The wisdom of the most vigorous cooperation which our efficient navy could give to the Peninsula campaign was so evident that the Confederates in their deliberations treated it as an established fact. This is the reason that,—while they detained the Union army to the last moment, in order that they might gain accessions to their own army from every quarter,—they did not fight McClellan to the death at Yorktown and on the Warwick. No more favorable field for them could possibly be found, if the navy was not to cooperate. But they saw it only as a struggle in a narrow strip of ground, with the Union army in front and the Union navy

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 246-250.

on the York and on the James shelling and riddling both flanks. The activity and the success of the navy in every aggressive movement left no doubt as to what would happen here. They would be practically surrounded, routed, bagged, and Richmond would be lost. This consideration made a position of almost insuperable advantage appear to the mind of General Lee and his advisers as an extremely weak one; and so, to the great surprise of General McClellan, the decisive battle which he confidently expected here was not fought, and on the 5th of May he passed the Warwick without having received a blow. The rebels had concluded that the struggle for Richmond must be waged on a field removed from navigable rivers, where in case of repulse they could retire within the entrenchments of that hilly city.

Accordingly, when Yorktown was deserted the Southern forces withdrew concurrently from all the strongholds in that section of Virginia. Gloucester Point, Norfolk, the batteries at the mouth of the James, were all abandoned. Norfolk was evacuated on the 10th of May, and on the 11th a force from Fortress Monroe accompanied by the President and the Secretary of War marched into it with much éclat. Mr. Flower, in his life of Mr. Stanton, gives a stirring picture of this bloodless "capture." [2]

The York River being now available, Franklin's division was shipped off on the 5th of May to West Point. The abandonment of Norfolk led to the destruction of the *Merrimac* in the Norfolk navy-yard by her crew on the 12th of May. The way up the James was now also practically clear, and the *Monitor* and the gunboats *Galena, Aroostook, Naugatuck,* and *Port Royal* ascended as far as Fort Darling, seven miles below Richmond. The elevation of this stronghold on Drewry's Bluff, one hundred and fifty feet above the river, made it invulnerable against their attack; and after a gallant bombardment they withdrew.

If this occupation of the James had been effected, as it easily could have been, directly after the repulse of the *Merrimac* on March 9th or at any time during March or

[2] Pp. 152, 155.

April, General McClellan would have sent his army directly up the James to Harrison's Landing; and this would have relieved him of many handicaps, and would possibly have forced the hands of his enemies in Washington; but this latter is by no means certain. Moreover, Stanton's intent of thwarting his success was so fixed and determined that the end would probably have been the same anyway,—that is, a fatal lack of support on the part of the Government, which would have left the army inadequate for its prime work, the capture of the rebel capital.

When the James was occupied, however, and even at the instant of the blowing up of the *Merrimac*, Franklin had already gone up the York and disembarked his forces at West Point near White House, and the whole army was well on its way up the York River.

Still McClellan would have transferred his army to the James as soon as it was assembled, about May the 18th, but for the interference of his military superiors at Washington. However, we must not anticipate. On the 4th day of May, 1862, Yorktown was occupied by the National troops, and on the 5th of May the advance reached Williamsburg, where the first struggle occurred. It was a surprise to both sides.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE FIRST ENCOUNTER—WILLIAMSBURG

The first serious encounter of the opposing armies in the Peninsula was accidental. McClellan rightly divined the purpose of Lee and Johnston, which was to defer an engagement until the Federals approached near to Richmond; and, as this suited him, he desired his vanguard to bring on no conflict until the whole army was united. But on the afternoon of May the 4th Stoneman's Cavalry reached Fort Magruder, about ten miles from Yorktown. This was an extensive fortification. Only the rear-guard of Johnston's army was there. Thinking a collision inevitable, Johnston held the fort and hurried back the retiring forces. Stoneman halted, awaiting the support of infantry, and before they were on the ground it was dark; so the attack could not begin until the morning of the 5th. It should not have begun at all. It was useless, and against orders. Fort Magruder was located only a mile east of Williamsburg. Here the James River takes a sharp turn to the northward, leaving a narrow neck of land between it and the York. Trees had been felled in great numbers, with their tops outward, making approach exceedingly slow and difficult. This difficulty was augmented greatly by the heavy rainfall of the night of the 4th of May, which put the roads in a condition almost impassable. As if to demonstrate with especial emphasis the almost criminal perversity or astounding idiocy of starting off an army enfeebled in numbers under such prohibitive conditions of earth and weather, it had rained almost without cessation from the moment when McClellan set foot on the Peninsula.

The Confederate forces at Williamsburg, which were only a portion of the retiring army, should convince any fair-minded reader how baseless and absurd is the assertion that only 15,000 men resisted the passage of the Warwick by Mc-

Clellan. Longstreet's division of six brigades and D. H. Hill's division of five brigades resisted the attack of the advance force of the Union army. Hooker's division of three brigades began the attack in front on the morning of the 6th. On him the enemy concentrated and his losses were heavy. Learning of the engagement that had taken place against his instructions, General McClellan had sent Kearney's division to assist Hooker, but it could not arrive until after four o'clock because of the condition of the roads. It then advanced with fine spirit, and Hooker's men withdrew. General Smith's division formed the Union right; about noon Hancock's brigade found and seized two empty redoubts which the enemy had overlooked, and General McClellan, seeing the advantage of Hancock's position, strongly reinforced him. This was the key of the situation, and the rebels tried in vain to retake it. They were driven back in confusion, "and during the night Longstreet and Hill retired to join the body of Johnston's army now rapidly marching toward the Chickahominy."

In a letter dated May 8th General Henry M. Naglee says: "The first order given by General McClellan was to send sufficient force to Hancock which saved us from sad disaster. General McClellan had ordered a reconnaissance and never dreamed that Sumner, Keyes and Heintzelman would bring on a fight." [1]

On the 16th of May, 1862, against great obstacles of weather and bog the advance reached White House, and General McClellan established his headquarters there. Because of the miry condition of the roads, due to the incessant downpour, it took forty-eight hours to move two divisions five miles. The 17th and 18th were spent in gathering in the troops and trains and in reconnoitering in all directions. The whole army being now in one body, McClellan, but for the facts we are about to state, would have moved at once to the James, where practically all writers admit he wished to be.

On the 18th day of May the Secretary of War issued an order, which McClellan with much reason calls "the fatal

[1] *Official Record*, XI, III, 150.

order," for it exposed the army to imminent danger of destruction, and did in fact fatally handicap the campaign. The senseless timidity of Stanton is manifest from the words I have italicized in his report, which was as follows:[2]

"WASHINGTON, May 18, 2 P. M.

"GENERAL: Your despatch to the President, asking reinforcements, has been received and carefully considered.

"The President is not willing to uncover the capital entirely; and it is believed that, even if this were prudent, it would require more time to effect a junction between your army and that of the Rappahannock by the way of the Potomac and York River than by a land march. In order, therefore, to increase the strength of the attack upon Richmond at the earliest moment, Gen. McDowell has been ordered to march upon that city by the shortest route.

"He is ordered, *keeping himself always in position to save the capital from all possible attack,* so to operate as to put his left wing in communication with your right wing, and you are instructed to co-operate so as to establish this communication as soon as possible, by extending your right wing to the north of Richmond.

"It is believed that this communication can be safely established either North or South of the Pamunkey river.

"In any event you will be able to prevent the main body of the enemy's forces from leaving Richmond and falling in overwhelming force upon Gen. McDowell. He will move with between thirty-five (35) and forty thousand (40,000) men.

"A copy of the instructions to Gen. McDowell are with this. The specific task assigned to his command has been to provide against any danger to the capital of the nation.

"At your earnest call for reinforcements he is sent forward to co-operate in the reduction of Richmond, but charged, in attempting this, *not to uncover the city of Washington, and you will give no order,* either before or after your junction, *which can put him out of position to cover this city.* You and he will communicate with each other, by telegraph or other-

[2] *Official Record,* XI, 1, 27.

wise, as frequently as may be necessary for sufficient co-operation. When Gen. McDowell is in position on your right his supplies must be drawn from West Point, and you will instruct your staff-officers to be prepared to supply him by that route.

"*The President desires that Gen. McDowell retain the command of the* Department of the Rappahannock and *of the forces with which he moves forward.*

"By order of the President.

"EDWIN M. STANTON,
"Secretary of War.

"MAJ.-GEN. GEO. B. MCCLELLAN."

At the date of this order the 5th and 6th corps were at White House; the 2d, the 3d, and the 4th were at New Kent Court House. "The necessity of following the enemy up until he was fairly across the Chickahominy and the question of supplies had naturally brought the Army of the Potomac into the positions just described." [3]

This order of May 18th was never revoked, and was treated by the War Department as in full force as late as the 26th of June, 1862.

The order had two malign results: first, it prevented McClellan from moving at once to the James and forced him to keep his base on the York; second, in order to maintain his communications and hold the positions he had acquired and at the same time extend his right wing to meet McDowell, it forced him to suffer his army to be divided by the Chickahominy River. In the midst of heavy rains the advance reached the river on the 20th of May. They found all the bridges destroyed, and these, numbering twenty or more, were rebuilt with McClellan's usual indefatigable energy, the men working cheerfully in the rain and in the water to their waists, all the while exposed to the guns of the enemy.

The order of May 18th was plainly inspired by one motive, a motive similar to that which kept McDowell from going to Fortress Monroe,—namely, the interposition of McClellan's army between Richmond and Washington.

[3] McClellan, *Own Story*, 342.

CHAPTER XXXII

STRADDLING THE CHICKAHOMINY

The men that have written concerning the Civil War look upon one matter with practical unanimity,—namely, that in urging the President to exercise his power as Commander in Chief of the army Mr. Stanton's chief object was to have the direction of the war devolve upon himself; and in this he was successful. The first step was the assertion of a paramount authority over the General in Chief in the war orders issued on January 27th, 1862, and later. The second was the reduction of McClellan's rank and the substitution of the Secretary of War as the directing head of operations.

It was incumbent upon him as head of the army to effect the junction of McClellan and McDowell as swiftly as possible, so that McClellan would not be detained for one unnecessary hour with an extended line, divided by a swollen and miry river.

It was incumbent upon him to keep advised of the movements of McClellan and McDowell, and to arrange so that when McClellan had reached the point of junction McDowell would be there also.

Nor would there have been the slightest difficulty in this. While McClellan was blocked below the Warwick because of the failure of naval cooperation the Confederate forces were confronting him, and McDowell had the whole month of April in which to move southward unmolested to the trysting place.

He could have leisurely selected the strongest defensive position to be found in that realm of hills and natural redoubts, within touching distance of the headwaters of the York, and there strongly improved every advantage of nature; and he could have immediately united with Franklin's

division when it reached West Point. As all the forces of the Confederacy were united, so all the Union forces in Northern Virginia,—numbering, as variously stated, from 80,000 to 100,000 men,—should have been united and awaiting Franklin the moment he disembarked at West Point. There was no difficulty in this. There was no danger in it. As the comparatively weak force of General Franklin, though unfortified, was not attacked by the rebels in full force, so the much greater force, fortified and prepared for an attack, would not have been. The resolution of the Confederates to avoid an engagement near navigable waters was fixed. With the arrival of McClellan, the full strength of the Federal armies would have been combined, and this great host would never have touched the Chickahominy. It would have been transferred at once to the James, and by water, if McClellan could have had his way, that being the quickest and the safest way. But, it may be urged, the concentration of forces at West Point, and later on the James, would have left the way to Washington open to the enemy. This is the swapping idea again. Washington was in no danger, unless the rebels abandoned Richmond to McClellan; and if they were willing to abandon it, could McDowell stay their way? If the rebels had disregarded McClellan, they could have fallen with overwhelming numbers on McDowell; and if he had shut himself up in Fredericksburg, they could have left him there and marched on to Washington.

When the Confederates retired they did not move northward, but retired on Richmond, intending to fight before its walls. So this gave McDowell twenty days more in which to meet McClellan. That is what McClellan expected. That is what would have happened if McClellan had had control of both armies. In May, 1864, General Grant was moving toward Richmond. Butler with 30,000 men advanced northward from the James to meet him, and the union was accomplished without the least difficulty.

But when McClellan reached the Chickahominy, McDowell was over fifty miles away at Fredericksburg, and continued to remain there, although McClellan was assured that

he was coming at once. He should not have been *coming.* He should have been *there,* and his own letters and statements supply convincing proof that he was sincerely eager to be there.

When the Southern forces were withdrawn from the Peninsula, it was to await the onset of the Federals at or near Richmond, where the navy could give no aid. But when McClellan's army had reached the Chickahominy and halted there the reason was quickly surmised, and measures were soon devised to forestall the junction of McDowell with McClellan. The amazing timidity of the civil officials who conducted the war was justly a matter of mirth as well as of contempt at Richmond. Let a Southerner rattle a pan in Northern Virginia and the heroes of the Capital feared that Washington would be instantly beleaguered. At a cabinet meeting held upon learning of the destruction of the *Cumberland* and the *Congress* the head of the War Department expressed the fear that a shell from the *Merrimac* might be hurled into the room where they sat before they could adjourn. Mr. Welles, who did not have an aspen heart, notes many similar instances in his "Diary."

Accordingly, the pans were rattled, and with entire and eminent success. The movement now set on foot was inspired by the pepper-box policy of scattering a number of weak and inefficient detachments over Northern Virginia, inviting attack, defeat, and disgrace to the Union army. Were there similar driblets of armed bodies distributed over Northern Virginia in the summer and fall of 1864? No. Where were they? In the army of General Sheridan. And were there rebel forces scampering over the country, frightening the wits out of the National cabinet? No. Where were they? Gathered into the army of General Early, who, being an able, vigilant and skilful leader, knew that in his struggle with "Fiery Phil" he needed every man of them. He did need them all—and more. So the folly of the "pepper-box" system was shown in Virginia both by trying it and by trying its opposite.

If the Administration had supported General McClellan

with whole-hearted vigor and sincerity from the outset, there would have been no question of junction, for the army would never have been divided; and as due credit to General Lee's sagacity forbids the idea that the Southern army would have been bagged in the Peninsula, the united Union army would have been, early in April, encamped upon the James in close proximity to Richmond, ready for offensive operations, powerful in numbers, and, operating on more favorable ground, would have fought a great battle there; all the rebel strength accessible would have been collected to withstand the onset, and the successive reverses of Banks and Fremont and Shields would never have happened.

Even the piety of gentlemen who were never seen in church was a factor in preventing the junction of the Union armies. If McDowell had set his corps in motion as late as the morning of the 25th of May, the armies would surely have met; and he would have done so but for orders from Washington directing him not to start until the 26th because the 25th was Sunday. He started at last, advanced six miles south of Fredericksburg, and was only thirty miles north of Hanover Court House when he received orders to suspend the movement, for the pans had rattled and the Administration was terrified. Washington was in peril!

CHAPTER XXXIII

JACKSON'S RUSE—BASELESS PANIC—M'DOWELL STILL COMING

To produce this panic and stay McDowell's advance a detachment of 14,000 men led by Stonewall Jackson fell upon a body of 6,000 Union troops under Schenk and Milroy near the town of McDowell and drove them back upon the main body of Fremont's army of 10,000 men at Franklin. Jackson then attacked Banks, who had from 16,000 to 20,000 men, at Strasburg and Banks retreated to Harper's Ferry. A little later Jackson repulsed Fremont and Shields, who were trying to unite, and then returned to Richmond.

Of these movements Mr. Swinton says:

"The tidings of Jackson's apparition at Winchester on the 24th, and his subsequent advance to Harper's Ferry, fell like a thunderbolt on the war-council at Washington. The order for McDowell's advance from Fredericksburg, to unite with McClellan, was instantly countermanded; and he was directed to put twenty thousand men in motion at once for the Shenandoah Valley, by the line of Manassas Gap Railroads. McDowell obeyed, but, to use his own language, 'with a heavy heart,' for he knew, what any man capable of surveying the situation with a soldier's eye must have known, that the movement ordered was not only most futile in itself, but certain to paralyze the operations of the main army and frustrate that campaign against Richmond on the issue of which hung the fortunes of war. In vain he pointed out that it was impossible for him either to succor Banks or co-operate with Fremont; that his line of advance from Fredericksburg to Front Royal was much longer than the enemy's line of retreat; that it would take him a week or ten days to reach the Valley, and that by this time the occasion for his services would have

passed by. In vain General McClellan urged the real motive of the raid—to prevent re-enforcements from reaching him. Deaf to all sounds of reason, the war-council at Washington, like the Dutch States-General, of whom Prince Eugene said, that 'always interfering, they were always dying with fear,' heard only the reverberations of the guns of the redoubtable Jackson. To head off Jackson, if possible to catch Jackson, seemed now the one important thing; and the result of the cogitation of the Washington strategists was the preparation of what the President called a 'trap' for Jackson—a 'trap' for the wily fox who was master of every gap and gorge in the Valley! Now this pretty scheme involved the converging movements of Fremont from the west, and McDowell from the east, upon Strasburg. The two columns moved rapidly; they had almost effected a junction on the 31st; but that very day Jackson, falling back from Harper's Ferry, slipped between the two, and made good his retreat up the Valley, leaving his opponents to follow in a long and fruitless Chevy Chase, all the time a day behind." [1]

On May 24th, having just returned from a visit to McDowell, the President shook off the influence of Stanton for the moment and wrote a cordial and encouraging letter to General McClellan, ending as follows: "McDowell and Shields both say they can and positively will move Monday morning (May 26th). I wish you to move cautiously and safely. You will have command of McDowell after he joins you precisely as you indicated in your long despatch to us of the 21st." In his despatch of the 21st General McClellan had urged the necessity of the full control by one general of the operations against Richmond. "Jackson was the first who fully realized how great was the influence which could be exerted on the politicians at Washington by even a small force within a striking distance." [2] "Jackson's late opponents were fearing instant attack, when he was fighting before Richmond, and McDowell alone saw that the right thing was to reinforce

[1] *Army of the Potomac*, 125, 126; and see De Joinville's *Army of the Potomac*, 112.

[2] Formby, *Civil War*, 114.

McClellan and neglect Jackson, but the terrified politicians would have none of it." [3]

There was joy in Richmond over Jackson's success. The ruse had won. The junction of the Union forces was at least deferred.

To the rulers of the nation this should have meant only a slight delay at the worst. The forces of Banks, Fremont, and Shields should have been united into one body, making a force of 34,000 men, to neutralize Jackson's 14,000, leaving McDowell free to join McClellan, or, better still, they too should have joined McClellan, making 74,000 men. But astonishing as it may seem, the junction being interrupted, all thought of it was therefore to be abandoned, and the Administration pursued the usual reckless and maddening course toward the commander of the army,—the course of goading him to instant action when action would have been most foolish and suicidal. Now again as at Yorktown, as if to be deprived of McDowell's corps was the one thing needed to ensure success, the President wires McClellan on May the 25th, "I think the time is near where you must either attack Richmond or give up the job and come to the defence of Washington." [4] There was something infinitely irritating in this; it was apparently so unreasonable, so devoid of common sense. But the proof grows stronger and stronger that it was not Lincoln; it was Stanton. With reports coming in constantly from Allan Pinkerton of the great strength of the enemy, the "Great War Secretary" would have been an idiot to dream that McClellan could take Richmond with only two-thirds of his expected force. The Secretary was many things, but no idiot. Wolseley thinks he was crazy, but we deny even that exoneration. "McClellan was expecting him [McDowell] with great anxiety. Without his aid he knew he could not capture Richmond." [5] "Had McDowell reinforced McClellan there is little doubt that the Federal army would have been

[3] Formby, *Civil War*, 118.
[4] *Official Record*, XI, 1, 32.
[5] Moore, *Great Rebellion*, 166.

successful."[6] "At the time the Army of the Potomac was toiling painfully up the Peninsula towards Richmond, the remaining forces in Northern Virginia presented the extraordinary spectacle of three distinct armies, planted on three separate lines of operations, under three independent commanders. The highland region of West Virginia had been formed into the 'Mountain Department' under command of General Fremont; the Valley of the Shenandoah constituted the 'Department of the Shenandoah' under General Banks; and the region covered by the direct lines of approach to Washington had been erected into the 'Department of the Rappahannock,' and assigned to General McDowell at the time his corps was detached from the Army of the Potomac. About the period reached by the narrative of events on the Peninsula, these armies were distributed as follows: General Fremont with a force of fifteen thousand men at Franklin, General Banks with a force of about sixteen thousand men at Strasburg, and General McDowell with a force of thirty thousand men at Fredericksburg on the Rappahannock. It need hardly be said that this arrangement, the like of which has not been seen since Napoleon scandalized the Austrians by destroying in succession half a dozen of their armies distributed after precisely this fashion—nor indeed was ever seen before, save in periods of the eclipse of all military judgment—was in violation of the true principles of war. One hardly wishes to inquire by whose crude and fatuous inspiration these things were done: but such was the spectacle presented by the Union forces in Virginia."[7]

[6] *Ibid.*, 199.
[7] Swinton, *Army of Potomac*, 122.

CHAPTER XXXIV

M'CLELLAN CLEARS THE WAY FOR M'DOWELL—HANOVER COURT HOUSE

On May 26th McClellan was again informed that McDowell was coming; and in order to aid and facilitate the junction and clear the way, by the commander's directions General Fitz John Porter started with his corps at daylight on the 27th, in heavy rain and over bad roads, and marched sixteen miles to Hanover Court House, which was held by General Branch with 13,000 Confederates. General Porter's force was of about equal size. After a preliminary brush at Peake's Station, two miles from Hanover Court House, the main body pressed forward, driving a force of the rebels before them toward the last-named place; but on their way the rear division of the corps was attacked by the main body of General Branch's command. The Union army immediately faced about, and while the rear divisions withstood the onset the forward troops, circling through the woods to the westward, fell upon the enemy's left flank, and a rout quickly followed. The Union loss was 355, the Southern loss 930.

Of the result of this action General Porter himself says: "On our return to camp all rejoiced at the success of our mission in securing for a reasonable time our flank from injury and preparing the whole army for a rapid advance on Richmond, and also by rendering McDowell's presence unnecessary for the defense of Washington, giving the War Department the opportunity of sending his corps by water to join us. If that had been done, none of the enemy could have been detached from Richmond to threaten Washington, and his forces in Northern Virginia would have been called to defend Richmond. But a mightier power interfered, and through years of trial and sufferings delayed the happy victory we then

hoped was in our hands. . . . McClellan had been forced into this faulty position on the Chickahominy and held there by the oft-repeated assurance that McDowell's corps of 40,000 men, then at Fredericksburg, would be advanced to Richmond and formed on his immediate right, which would make that wing safe. On the 27th of May, under promise that McDowell would join him at once, McClellan cleared his front of all opposition to his rapid march, by operations at Hanover Court House. If McDowell had joined McClellan then, it would have resulted in the capture of Richmond. That junction could also easily have been brought about immediately after the battle of Fair Oaks, and even then Richmond could have been taken. But the Confederate authorities so skilfully used Jackson, in the Valley of Virginia, as to draw off McDowell; while the fears of the administration, then aroused for the safety of Washington, together with a changed policy, caused him to be held back from the Army of the Potomac; and, although orders were several times issued requiring McDowell to unite with McClellan, and assurances were given as late as June 26th that he would so unite, yet he never arrived, and the right wing of McClellan's army, then left exposed, became the object of attack. . . . In the middle of June General McClellan intrusted to me the management of affairs on the North bank of the Chickahominy, and confided to me his plans as well as his hopes and apprehensions. His plans embraced defensive arrangements against an attack from Richmond upon our weak right flank. We did not fear the result of such an attack if made by the forces from Richmond alone; but if, in addition, we were to be attacked by Jackson's forces, suspicions of whose approach were already aroused, we felt that we should be in peril. But as Jackson had thus far prevented McDowell from joining us, we trusted that McDowell, Banks, and Fremont, who had been directed to watch Jackson, would be able to prevent him from joining Lee, or, at least, would give timely warning of his escape from their front and follow close upon his heels." [1]

The way was now clear for the advance of the coming

[1] *Battles and Leaders*, II, 323, 324, 325.

army. General Porter remained in the neighborhood of Hanover Court House on the 28th and 29th, and it would have been very easy for McDowell's troops to join him and return with him. Having struck at Banks and terrorized the un-Roman-like civilians at Washington, Jackson flew back to Lee to join in an attack on the unsupported and abandoned McClellan, whose disadvantageous situation astride the river was well known. Why the other forces,—all the Union forces in Virginia,—were not likewise immediately concentrated and advanced southward and why it was ever thought necessary to add 20,000 of McDowell's army to the 34,000 other troops in Northern Virginia because of Jackson's raid with 14,000 men, it is hard to explain except upon the ground of absurd fear.

And when Jackson retired, why were not McDowell's men hurried back to him and the forward movement resumed? No reason has ever been given. Mr. Headley, after stating that Jackson failed in his purpose of destroying Banks's army, adds: "The second object, however, he most successfully accomplished: of frightening the Secretary of War out of his propriety. He had achieved no substantial victory over Banks, but he did over the War Department. The Secretary immediately ordered Fremont to move across the mountains, and cut off Jackson's retreat, and McDowell from the East to detach a division for the same purpose, while he telegraphed to the North for troops to be sent forward in all haste, as the Capital was in danger. The former was wise action—the latter absurd, and created a needless panic. The entire militia was at once called out for three months, though only a part of them proceeded to Washington.

"That a general, with the capacity that Jackson had showed himself to possess, would, with twenty or twenty-five thousand men, push a hundred miles from the base of his operations, between two flanking armies, cross the Potomac, dash on Washington, and expect ever to get back again, was too absurd an idea to be entertained for a moment."[2]

There was no reason for further hesitation save the amaz-

[2] *Great Rebellion*, I, 448, 449.

ing panic of the Washington authorities. There was no force of Confederates about that time in Central or Northern Virginia save that of General Branch, which was dislodged on the 27th of May by General Porter; and if the Union forces in Northern Virginia had concentrated and moved forward, the history of the Peninsula Campaign would have been a very different story. But nothing of this nature happened, and a great host of Union soldiers remained idly and uselessly scattered over Northern Virginia, from want of a little of the right kind of sense and of courage and patriotism and energy in their civil superiors in the Capital, while the utmost force the Confederates could gather from everywhere piled in a solid mass upon the divided and extended lines of McClellan in the morasses of the Chickahominy.

The courage, the tenacity, the undismayed cheerfulness of General McClellan, in view of the situation and the conditions surrounding him, were never surpassed. He was the ideal Greatheart, and surely he was in a Slough of Despond. Encamped in a morass; the spirit of his men chilled by their environment and by constant drenching rains; his army divided by a river the floods of which kept carrying away the bridges and so endangering the connection of the army; held in this position, which invited attack and imperiled his safety, by an order which was never revoked, an order to facilitate a junction with McDowell's army, a junction that was daily expected but never consummated,—all this was heart-breaking.

Mr. Headley thus vividly paints the situation: "Some of the people, misled by Stanton's press messages, blamed McClellan; others upbraided the government and accused it of wantonly imperilling the country to effect the ruin of McClellan, and made the President and Secretary of War little better than traitors." [3]

The only commendation McClellan ever received for clearing the way for McDowell was a cynical, depreciatory note from the President,[4] entirely in line with the nagging treat-

[3] *The Great Rebellion*, I, 419, 420.
[4] *Letters*, II, 263, 264.

ment usually accorded to the general. There was a total absence of jubilation, an entire want of cordial congratulation upon the vigor shown and the completeness of his success.

In the midst of this record-breaking season, with the rain falling in torrents almost daily, General McClellan displayed his customary energy in putting up and maintaining bridges over the flooded river and in entrenching his lines. But the swamps, the floods, the incessant rains, and the lack of sincere and cordial support, with a great host of idle soldiers so short a distance away, created a situation dispiriting to the verge of madness; and exposure, overwork, and anxiety, in spite of his powerful frame and naturally robust health, more than once during this period brought on a swiftly passing illness.

McDowell was still coming when Lee on the 31st of May, with all the concentrated strength of his greatly superior numbers, furiously attacked the isolated left wing of the Union army. This was the battle of Fair Oaks, or Seven Pines.

CHAPTER XXXV

FAIR OAKS

The Chickahominy River rises about fifteen miles northwest of Richmond and runs in a general course almost due southeast, coming at the nearest point about six miles from the city. In this vicinity it is ordinarily about forty feet wide and four or five feet deep; but it runs here through a low swampy section and on the coming of heavy rains floods the country. On the west side of the river and between it and Richmond were two corps of the Union army,—those of Keyes and Heintzelman. The advance had been gradual and cautious, and each position in turn had been fortified. Keyes's corps crossed on the 25th of May at Bottom's Bridge. This point was secured by strong earthworks; and the corps then moved on to a point about two miles from Seven Pines and nearly three miles from Fair Oaks, a station on the Richmond and Yorktown Railway. Redoubts were erected here, and it was known as the Third Line of Defense.

On the 27th, Casey's division reached Seven Pines, which was an important point in a military sense, as here several roads met; and this was made the Second Line. The division then proceeded a mile westward on the Williamsburg Road, and had made good progress in strengthening this position, the First Line, against a front attack, but had not had time yet to protect the right flank against an advance by the Nine Mile road, which approached the right and rear from the northeast.

While this advance was in progress, General Heintzelman had crossed at Bottom's Bridge. Kearney's division was stationed there and Hooker's was detached to guard the bridge over the White Oak Swamp, three miles away to the south. Sumner was about to cross the river farther up. Almost

incessant rain had pursued the Army of the Potomac up the Peninsula. From the 22d to the 25th of May it came down with unusual fury. Then there was a lull, which was utilized in replacing the bridges swept away and in preparing for an advance on Richmond, as it seemed that McDowell was not to come. "All the bridges and fords along the Chickahominy in their front were in possession of the Federals; and they were rapidly constructing new bridges." [1]

If there had been no interference from Washington, there would have been no battle of Fair Oaks. In the first place, the Union army would have been on the James; but waiving that, the army, if on the Chickahominy, would not have been astride of it. If the hope of McDowell had not been held out and the army forced into a perilous position, it would have been in a compact body and would have struck first. It was the waiting for McDowell under a positive order that checked the advance, and this compulsory delay was mistaken for hesitation and timidity, and brought on an attack. The weather played a prominent rôle in this fierce drama. Many careless or uninformed writers, knowing that there were on the 31st of May only two bridges over that part of the river which separated the two corps already mentioned from the rest of the army, think that General McClellan showed no wisdom in not providing for more ready communication. They are unaware that more than twenty bridges were built under his orders, but they were all swept away by the unprecedented floods,—except the two mentioned,—and only one, the Grapevine Bridge, was really serviceable. Moreover, while the rain came down in torrents, the work of intrenching could not continue; otherwise Casey's division would have been much better prepared on the 31st to meet the brunt of the rebel attack.

Everything favored the Confederates, for, as General McClellan tells us, "exposure and fatigue had brought on a violent attack of illness," which confined him to bed on the 30th and during the morning of the 31st. To the Confederates it seemed as if the Third and Fourth corps were cut off from

[1] *Battles and Leaders*, II, 223.

aid and could not escape destruction. General Johnston's plan was to attack at dawn, at 4 A. M., on the 31st. The divisions of Longstreet and G. W. Smith were to advance by the Nine Mile road and strike the weak right flank of Casey's position. D. H. Hill's division was to advance by the Williamsburg road a little farther to the West and engage the enemy in front, and Huger's division was to proceed by the Charles City road farther South and come upon Casey's left flank. But Longstreet by mistake got upon the Williamsburg road above its junction with the Charles City road, and, being ahead of Huger, barred him from getting on the latter road and assumed command of Hill and Huger. If he had been on the right road, he would have been under General Smith's orders. As the result of the bungling of Longstreet, the battle did not begin until one o'clock. Casey's division consisted of the brigades of Palmer, Wessells and Naglee. The attacking force directly in front, under D. H. Hill, was composed of the brigades of Rodes, Rains, Garland, and Anderson. Garland, Anderson, and Rodes made a furious assault on the works before them, while Rains made a detour to the right, and the Federals were soon exposed to a flank and rear fire, as well as a furious assault in front. Up to this point they had made a stout resistance, but they were then driven back to the Second Line; and as the brigade of R. H. Anderson came to the assistance of D. H. Hill, it seemed as if the Union troops would be speedily swept away, though General Couch with two regiments had come up to aid in their defense. The fresh troops resisted stubbornly, but were forced back about half a mile, where they made a stand; and being at this point reinforced by General Sumner with Sedgwick's division, the Federals repulsed the enemy with great loss, and finally routed all the attacking forces as darkness closed the fight. Berry's and Jameson's brigades, of Kearney's division, reached the field late in the afternoon and did good service on the Federal left. Through some further bungling, of General Longstreet apparently, the five brigades on the Charles City road took no part in the battle; those on the Nine Mile road came into action only after Sumner's corps had reached the field,

and in the attack on the Federal right wing their losses were heavy and they were obliged to fall back. It was here that Generals Johnston, Hampton, and Pettigrew were all wounded. The attack had failed,—at least so far.

It was confidently expected by General Johnston that the river would prove impassable; but General McClellan, though in bed, having learned of an expected attack, directed General Sumner to be ready to cross the river at a moment's notice. There were two divisions,—Richardson's and Sedgwick's,—each of which had built a bridge opposite to itself. At one o'clock each was at its bridge. The order came at 2:30 P. M., and the passage at once began; but it was found that only the upper or "grapevine" bridge opposite Sedgwick was available. The farther end of this was afloat, but when filled with soldiers the weight forced that end down upon its base, and it was so held in place until the corps had passed, taking one battery with them. Scarcely was the last gun over when the timbers began to float away. But for the timely aid of Sedgwick's division, the forces of Heintzelman and Keyes would have been in great peril. An array of twenty-four guns brought to bear in an open field upon the enemy quickly turned the tide.

CHAPTER XXXVI

FAIR OAKS—THE SECOND DAY

If we give heed to those who were not present, like General Johnston, or to those who were present but would like to forget it, like General Longstreet, there was no second day; but if we prefer the testimony of General G. W. Smith, who succeeded to the chief command of the Southern army on the afternoon of the 31st when General Johnston was severely wounded and carried from the field, and if we listen to the Union officers whose attention General Smith occupied very pressingly on the first of June, 1862, there was a very severe conflict on the second day, which General Johnston knew nothing about and which General Longstreet naturally had no desire to remember.

On the morning of June 1st the Union army was greatly strengthened. Richardson's division with three batteries was added to Sedgwick's, and General Hooker's division had come up from White Oak Swamp. The brunt of the attack conducted by Longstreet on the Confederate right was borne by Richardson, who was soon assisted by Hooker; the enemy was driven back and all the positions lost on the preceding day were now regained.

According to General Smith, Longstreet was the marplot of the second day, as he had been of the first. He was to lead the attack by a determined assault on the Federal left, to be followed by similar action by Whiting's brigade on the Federal right. The fighting began at 5 A. M. Hours passed and there was no sign of an attack in full force. "Longstreet's troops were evidently losing ground without his having made an attack with more than a very small portion of the right wing."[1] About 10:30 A. M. appeals for aid came thick and fast from him, saying that he must retreat unless

[1] *Battles and Leaders*, II, 253.

help came. But we are told that "his leading troops had fallen back sometime before." McLaws was sent with 5,000 more; at 2 P. M. Longstreet wanted 10,000 more; but the fight was over. General Smith learned later, to his disgust, that General Longstreet had made no use of the troops under D. H. Hill,—thirteen brigades. He tells us that the Confederates held the redoubts first captured until sunrise on June 2d, and then retired without compulsion to their former camps.

The design of the attack had failed; and the character of the contest for the two days is indicated by the fact that the total Union loss was 5,031, the total Southern loss 6,134.

The high estimation which the Southern leaders entertained for McClellan's military talents has been abundantly recorded. Their acts supply the best evidence of it. No such rebel army was ever assembled in Virginia at any other time as that which was collected from every quarter to oppose McClellan. Troops were hurried in from the Carolinas and Georgia, and a little later even from the West, for the defense of Richmond.

The crisis over, they hastened back to the various points from which they had come.

Throughout the two days' struggle a great captive balloon, high in the air above McClellan's headquarters, enabled trusty aids to survey the whole vicinity and telegraph every movement of the enemy.

The battle of the second day was on Sunday, "a day of rest to the millions, who rose to their morning devotions, ere the bell summoned them to the place of prayer and praise, but not one of rest to the tired and decimated armies which the roll of the drum called from their wet beds of earth to the shock of battle." [2]

As the result of the floods of the 31st of May, not only had the bridges to be rebuilt, as we are told, but the timbers had to be dragged through deep mud and water, while the ground, swampy enough before, had become a bottomless bog. The men suffered severely from the deluge. It put their camps in a dreadful condition, and when hot weather

[2] *Great Rebellion*, I, 432.

followed they were exposed to malaria. It was a practical proof of the almost criminal recklessness of forcing an army to wage war under such prohibitive conditions. But they had confidence in their leader, and they expected every day that the rainy season would end and their discomforts be over. It is said, too, that at this time the people generally had great confidence in McClellan, but feared that he had been insufficiently supplied with means. No one in the army dreamed of the possibility that this great scheme of operations would be abandoned and the war in Virginia begun all over again.

On the 2d of June the commander issued a proclamation complimenting the bravery of his men in past engagements and calling upon them to make one last, supreme, decisive effort in the great battle at hand. This is by certain writers supposed to be solely a *conditional* intention, in the full belief that McDowell's legions would be no longer withheld. But this view cannot be harmonized with McClellan's private letters to his wife. From these letters it is evident that, McDowell or no McDowell, his plan was laid to strike as soon as the elemental conditions would permit. For, if the ground had solidity enough to give him the full use of his artillery, he felt that, thanks to himself, his strong equipment in that line largely atoned for his inadequacy of numbers. But during the first twenty days of June a practically continuous tempest seemed to exclude the idea that there would ever come a surcease of earth-soaking rain. It required labor and ingenuity to keep the field-guns from sinking out of sight in the jelly-like mud.

With this great factor in his operations paralyzed, he could not have moved, even if McDowell had joined him. Like Napoleon, he had to wait for the rain to stop and the earth to dry. Unaware of or forgetting the obstacles created by Jupiter Pluvius, one writer says he should at this time have attacked Richmond, as he was within five miles of it; another asserts that this was his chance to move unmolested to the James. But he could not do this, for the order which placed him there held him there to await McDowell, who was still

coming. The folly of an assault upon Richmond will be made clearly evident.

But for the terrible weather, General McClellan could have made his position impregnable, and could have constructed so many bridges over the river that it would no longer have been a factor in the movements of either army; but the repeated bridging of the stream kept the Union forces busy whenever the elements made work possible. No time need be given to that consideration, however, for if the weather had been fit either for working or fighting, it is clear to any one who studies the movements, the despatches, and, more than all, the private letters of the commander that he would not have waited long for McDowell. He would have struck and relied on his efficient artillery to more than offset the preponderance of numbers against him; and that there was a great preponderance we will demonstrate at the proper time by irresistible proofs. Handicap after handicap had been heaped upon him ever since the appearance of Mr. Stanton in the arena of politics, but far beyond all these was the overwhelming downpour, chilling alike the bodies, the spirits, and the courage of the most resolute, wrecking every plan, and paralyzing every form of activity.

While holding both the army of Lee and the army of McClellan inert, the weather should for this very reason have encouraged Mr. Stanton to accede to the oft-repeated appeals of the Union general to send McDowell's corps to him *by water*. For this he was constantly importuning. If McDowell had been sent to West Point by water about the time when Franklin arrived there, or in the flooding days of May and June, or to Urbanna and thence by a short march to West Point, the united army could with ease have located itself between the enemy and Washington. Mr. Ellis says: "The labor and loss of time in bridging the Chickahominy would have been saved, and the forces being concentrated, there is every reason to believe that the fall of Richmond would have followed. The ever present fear of the capture of Washington, prevented the President from complying with the request

of McClellan." [3] Speaking of the result of the dislodging of the enemy at Hanover Court House, General Porter assures us that "our movement had caused the rapid retreat to Richmond of Joseph R. Anderson's command, thereby relieving McDowell from active operations in Northern Virginia, as well as opening the way for him to join us." [4] "It was apparent to both generals that Richmond could only be taken in one of two ways: by regular approaches or by assault. . . . An assault would require superior forces, supported by ample reserves. It was equally apparent that an attack could readily be made from Richmond, because that city's well armed and manned intrenchments would permit its defense by a small number of men, while large forces could be concentrated and detached for offensive operations." [5]

"Despite delays, drawn battles, losses and depletions from natural obstacles, McClellan had succeeded as he had promised in reaching the vicinity of the rebel capital and thus relieving Washington, alarming the Southern leaders and raising the anticipations of the North. It would seem that on this favored outlook, the government would have strained every move to carry the campaign successfully through by reinforcing the army." [6]

We are told that letters were flowing into Washington, begging that reinforcements be sent on with all haste to McClellan and that they be sent while hesitation and delay marked the action of the Federal government; that at Richmond, on the contrary, everything was moving with prodigious energy, and that from every accessible quarter, even from North and South Carolina and Georgia, regiments were rushing forward with desperate speed.[7] When Lee requested that all the soldiers in and about Richmond be sent to him except two brigades Mr. Davis replied, "Confidence in you overcomes the view which would otherwise be taken of the exposed condition of Richmond, and the troops retained for the defense

[3] *History of the United States*, III, 995.
[4] *Battles and Leaders*, 321.
[5] *Ibid.*, 324.
[6] Webb, *The Peninsula*, 120.
[7] Headley, *Heroes and Battles of the Civil War*, 500.

of the capital are surrendered to you on a renewed request." "This reply of Mr. Davis makes it evident that on the Confederate side there was one able head which guided, in strong contrast with the Federal divisions of authority and the interference of the President and his cabinet." [8]

[8] Rhodes, *History of the United States*, IV, 121.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE POLICY OF STANTON—SPEEDY SUCCESS NOT DESIRED—THE WAR MUST BE PROLONGED

The confident manner in which McClellan cleared the way for McDowell illustrates his aggressiveness, and indicates beyond doubt that if it had been desirable for McClellan to join McDowell at Fredericksburg, this would have been promptly effected. There would then have been no waiting at all. What makes the terror of the government at this time appear especially amazing and culpable is the fact that a captured letter from General Johnston at this time plainly stated that the sole object of Jackson's raid was to frighten the Federal authorities and thus to detain McDowell from McClellan.

The waiting and the weather and the attitude of the authorities must have brought a man of McClellan's spirit to the verge of madness. Only his religious spirit sustained him.

Even timidity is a praiseworthy motive of action, in preference to that which is presented to our attention by the following anecdote. About this time it is related that Major Charles Davies, a noted author of mathematical works and at one time professor of mathematics at West Point, was a member of a committee sent from New York to urge a more vigorous support of McClellan. The committee called upon the President. Mr. Stanton was with him. They presented their views to the President, but it was Mr. Stanton who responded, saying that the great end of the war was to uproot slavery, and that if it should be brought to an end before the nation was ready for that event, it would be a failure; in other words, that the war must be prolonged and conducted so as to achieve that object, that the people of the North were not yet ready to accept that view, and that it would not do to permit

General McClellan to succeed until they were; that, accordingly, it was not the policy of the government to strengthen him so as to insure his success. This was the view of the extreme Radicals. The above story was told by Major Davies after the war, at one time to General McClellan, at another time to General Joseph E. Johnston, of the Confederate army.[1] "The Radical party cared nothing for the success of the war, unless it could be used for revenge upon the Southern people and embrace a design upon the institution of slavery. Wendell Phillips, a famous Radical orator in the North, had not hesitated to declare that he would deplore a victory of McClellan, because a sore would be salved over and it would be the victory of a *slave* Union; that he thanked Beauregard for marshalling his army before Washington because it had conferred upon Congress the constitutional power to abolish slavery." [2]

Mr. Elson skeptically mentions this alleged reason for not supporting McClellan and gravely adds: "If it were so, we cannot hesitate to give it our approval." [3] This declaration, made quite recently, exhibits the wild fanaticism of the extremists. McClellan, being conservative in his views, incurred their deadliest enmity. Those who were not fully with them they looked upon as foes. "They therefore determined to ruin me in any event and by any means: first by endeavoring to force me into premature movements, knowing that a failure would probably end my military career; afterward by withholding the means necessary to achieve success. . . . Having failed to force me to advance when an advance would have been madness, they withheld the means of success when I was in contact with the enemy, and finally relieved me from command when the game was in my hands. They determined that I should not succeed and carried out their determination only too well, at a fearful sacrifice of blood, time and treasure." [4]

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 150, 151.
[2] Pollard, *Lost Cause*, 299.
[3] *History of the United States*, 711.
[4] McClellan, *Own Story*, 150.

But there was another reason with Stanton, a potent reason, which was more practical,—the continuance of the existing administration must be promoted; the party must be fostered and built up. To that object he gave his sagest consideration and surely not without fruit.

General McClellan held the military sagacity of General Lee in the highest estimation; and as the days passed, and the rain still came pouring down, and abundant time was given his opponent to consider the situation of the Federal army, McClellan foresaw what was likely to happen. If the storms continued and McDowell failed to arrive, fate would set him free to go where he had always wished to go,—that is, to the James. On June the 4th he wrote to the President.

"June 4.—Please inform me at once what reinforcements, if any, I can count upon having at Fortress Monroe or White House within the next three days, and when each regiment may be expected to arrive. It is of the utmost importance that I should know this immediately. The losses in the battle of the 31st and 1st will amount to (7,000) seven thousand. Regard this as confidential for the present.

"If I can have five new regiments for Fort Monroe and its dependencies, I can draw three more old regiments from there safely. I can well dispose of four more raw regiments on my communications. I can well dispose of from fifteen to twenty well-drilled regiments among the old brigades in bringing them up to their original effective strength. Recruits are especially necessary for the regular and volunteer batteries of artillery, as well as for the regular and volunteer regiments of infantry. After the losses in our last battle I trust that I will no longer be regarded as an alarmist. I believe we have at least one more desperate battle to fight. . . .

"In reply to your despatch of two P. M. to-day, I have the honor to state that the Chickahominy river has risen so as to flood the entire bottoms to the depth of three and four feet. I am pushing forward the bridges in spite of this, and the men are working night and day, up to their waists in water, to complete them.

"The whole face of the country is a perfect bog, entirely impassable for artillery, or even cavalry, except directly in the narrow roads, which renders any general movements, either of this or the rebel army, entirely out of the question until we have more favorable weather.

"I am glad to learn that you are pressing forward reinforcements so vigorously.

"I shall be in perfect readiness to move forward and take Richmond the moment McCall reaches here and the ground will admit the passage of artillery. I advanced my pickets about a mile to-day, driving off the rebel pickets and securing a very advantageous position.

"The rebels have several batteries established, commanding the debouches from two of our bridges, and fire upon our working parties continually; but as yet they have killed but very few of our men.

"June 10.—I have again information that Beauregard has arrived, and that some of his troops are to follow him. No great reliance—perhaps none whatever—can be attached to this; but it is possible, and ought to be their policy.

"I am completely checked by the weather. The roads and fields are literally impassable for artillery, almost so for infantry. The Chickahominy is in a dreadful state; we have another rainstorm on our hands.

"I shall attack as soon as the weather and ground will permit; but there will be a delay, the extent of which no one can foresee, for the season is altogether abnormal.

"In view of these circumstances, I present for your consideration the propriety of detaching largely from Halleck's army to strengthen this; for it would seem that Halleck has now no large organized force in front of him, while we have. If this cannot be done, or even in connection with it, allow me to suggest the movement of a heavy column from Dalton upon Atlanta. If but the one can be done it would better conform to military principles to strengthen this army. And even although the reinforcements might not arrive in season to take part in the attack upon Richmond, the moral effect

would be great, and they would furnish valuable assistance in ulterior movements.

"I wish to be distinctly understood that, whenever the weather permits, I will attack with whatever force I may have, although a larger force would enable me to gain more decisive results.

"I would be glad to have McCall's infantry sent forward by water at once, without waiting for his artillery and cavalry.

"If General Prim returns via Washington, please converse with him as to the condition of affairs here." [5]

On the 5th he wrote to Mrs. McClellan: "June 5, 9 A. M. (Thursday), New Bridge.—We have had a terrible time during the last few days: torrents of rain constantly falling; ground a sea of mud; the Chickahominy a booming river; bridges swept away; the railroad pretty much used up—in short, about all the troubles that armies fall heir to, except defeat! But I am so grateful that God gave us the victory that I will not complain of minor evils. The enemy must have been very badly whipped not to have renewed his attack under the very favorable circumstances of the last few days." [6]

On June the 18th, anticipating that McDowell would come neither by land nor water and that the great army of Lee would cut him off from West Point, he arranged to have the vessels in the York convey his supplies to the James. But he was not free yet, for McDowell was still "coming"; and the order which anchored him on the Chickahominy was still in force.

[5] McClellan, *Own Story*, 386, 387, 388.
[6] *Ibid.*, 399.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

FIVE MILES FROM RICHMOND

The anticipation that McDowell would not come and that his communications would be severed did not prevent McClellan from resolving to strike as soon as he could efficiently use his guns. There being a little respite from the elements on the 15th, he wrote on that day to his wife:

"We have had several skirmishes. The rebels have attacked our pickets on several points, but were everywhere beaten back with the loss of several killed and a respectable number of prisoners. . . . I do not think our rain of to-day will do much harm. The chances now are that I will make the first advance on Tuesday or Wednesday. By that time I think the ground will be fit for the movements of artillery and that all our bridges will be completed. I think the rebels will make a desperate fight, but I feel sure that we will gain our point. Look on the maps I sent you a day or two ago, and find 'Old Tavern,' on the road from New Bridge to Richmond; it is in that vicinity that the next battle will be fought. I think that they see it in that light, and that they are fully prepared to make a desperate resistance. I shall make the first battle mainly an artillery combat. As soon as I gain possession of the 'Old Tavern' I will push them in upon Richmond and behind their works; then I will bring up my heavy guns, shell the city, and carry it by assault. I speak very confidently, but if you could see the faces of the troops as I ride among them you would share my confidence. They will do anything I tell them to do. . . . The next battle will doubtless be a desperate one, but I think that I can so use our artillery as to make the loss of life on our side comparatively small." [1]

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 405.

On Wednesday the 25th day of June hostilities were resumed by an advance of the left wing about a mile. Of this engagement, known as Oak Grove, a very brief description will answer every purpose. In front of the first line of redoubts on the Williamsburg and Richmond road was a broad, clear field; then came a space of swampy timber land, and then a second field just beyond, at the farther side of which were the entrenchments of the enemy. Between eight and nine on the morning of the 25th General Heintzelman's corps started out to occupy this second field. The enemy was in strong force and resisted tenaciously, and the fight lasted until sunset; but the rebels were driven from the coveted position. Its occupation was desired to support the attack on Old Tavern that was to be made a day or two later.

As the result of this advance, the extreme left wing was now only five miles from Richmond. From the captive army-balloon at night the gleaming of the street lights in the Pride of the Confederacy could be plainly seen, and by day the foliage and verdure of many parks which stand high in that City of Hills and many prominent buildings could be easily distinguished, while to the people of the city the word "Union," in great letters on the balloon, bore a frequent menace.

Five miles from Richmond! No other Union army was ever so near again until the Confederates abandoned it. Not only was this army there, but there in excellent condition and dauntless spirit, and there too in spite of bottomless mire and incessant rain. At Williamsburg, at West Point, at Hanover Court House, and at Fair Oaks,—excepting only Casey's men, who did but lead them into a greater surprise a little later,—the Confederates must have wondered where were the cravens of the Potomac. In spite of the great numbers of the enemy, if the elements had been propitious, McClellan would have advanced upon Richmond. Even without McDowell he would have struck. He was about to strike. The same pluck which had brought him there would have brought him farther; but the spongy soil was kept saturated, and his artillery, his great reliance against superior numbers, was useless to him. He must wait, and meantime many Blüchers were gathering, and

his Grouchy,—McDowell,—as fate decreed, was never to arrive.

Five miles from Richmond—how much is in that phrase! What a practical appreciation of the military skill of the Federal commander it conveys. It was like the evacuation of Manassas and the Potomac; of Yorktown and Norfolk and Gloucester. From what other commander of that army did Lee retire? Here was a Union army intact and powerful, at the very gates of the Southern capital. Why was it allowed to get there, and in such fine condition? It was the compliment, not of words but of acts, paid by the Confederates to McClellan's military genius. While, through the influence of Stanton, a considerable number of people were led to wonder if McClellan could wisely be entrusted with a regiment or even a company, the ablest generals of Dixie felt that he was so formidable and dangerous that the struggle with him must be made only in the most favorable environment and with the greatest aggregation of forces which could possibly be collected. Find, if you can, when such another Union army, intact or in any condition, was ever so close to Richmond until it was evacuated. Certainly Pope, Burnside, Hooker, or Meade were never so close while they were at the head of the Army of the Potomac. Not even General Grant approached so near; and the wreckage of a great army which arrived at the James on June 16th, 1864, as will be hereafter explained was very different from the army which lay encamped before Richmond from May the 20th to June the 26th, 1862, waiting for McDowell to come or the rains to cease. Five miles from Richmond! If the weather had only been propitious from the time of his arrival! But they who pushed him out in the rain invited this condition and tempted fate to prolong it. Why was not McDowell given to McClellan by water or by land in this last long stretch of days from June the 10th to June the 26th, while the attention of the Southerners was wholly engrossed with the gathering of the clans who were to overwhelm and crush the Union army, and while not even a Southern cow-bell tinkled in Northern Virginia to create a panic in the gentle breasts of the Wash-

ingtonians? There was no straw in the way, and McDowell was bravely and patriotically fretting to be with the main army. His troops, as we have seen, had once started and marched eight miles, but were recalled by orders emanating from Washington,—eight miles south of Fredericksburg; fifteen miles from Hanover Court House. If he had advised McClellan of his advance, McClellan would have met him at the end of the first day's march.

At this juncture we have clear proof of the cunning and perfidy of Mr. Stanton. Fully advised by McClellan's despatches of the dispiriting difficulties of rain and flood and their attendant evils, against which McClellan was battling in the Virginian bogs; knowing of the extraordinary forces collecting to defend Richmond; and keeping, and continuing to keep, away from McClellan the forces which alone could ensure a successful assault, he as the national press agent circulated the report through all the journals of the nation that Richmond was about to fall. But for Stanton the army would have been united and would have been much larger and better equipped; but for him it would not have been battling with bogs and floods and rain. He had every reason to expect a disaster or at least a repulse. Such a result was not merely to be expected by him. He had ensured it. Yet he so represented the situation that many great journals of the nation had fireworks fixed upon their buildings ready to be touched off the instant the news was flashed to them, and great preparations were made to celebrate the floating of our flag over the ramparts of Richmond, and on the nearly approaching Fourth of July was to be celebrated the fall of the Southern Capital and the death-blow to the rebellion. No more crafty plot than this for the overthrow and ruin of a patriotic and able general was ever conceived. With such an impression everywhere, disaster, repulse, or even much delay would naturally stir up strong adverse feeling.

The Comte de Paris intimates that it was a perfidious scheme of Stanton's, designed to excite public opinion against McClellan.[2] Our present knowledge of Stanton's hostility to

[2] *History of the Civil War*, II, 112.

McClellan, proven by the testimony of his co-secretaries and even by his own letters, tends to confirm this view.

The War Secretary's chief idolater, Mr. Flower, assures us that Mr. Stanton never permitted reporters to come to the War Department. That is no doubt true, but it is the statement of a negative pregnant. How he dealt with the press is of no importance. That his object in centering the wires in his office was to be the autocrat of war intelligence, to publish what he pleased and revise it as he pleased, appears clearly from Mr. Flower's biography.[3]

The Compte de Paris says: "The government, still cherishing a secret jealousy of McClellan, seldom communicated to the public the tidings it received from him."[4] "The government sought to conceal facts which made the chief responsibility for reverses fall upon itself. It persistently refused to give the text of McClellan's despatches to the papers and when the whole series of official documents were given to the Committee on the Conduct of the War it permitted itself to mutilate the text of its correspondence with the general, without making any mention of the omissions."[5]

On the 25th, evidently disgusted, and indignant at the failure of the Administration to reinforce him when half of the forces senselessly scattered over Northern Virginia would have enabled him within a few days to hoist the Stars and Stripes over the Confederate Capital, he sent this telegram to Mr. Stanton:

"HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
"CAMP LINCOLN, June 25, 1862,—6:15 P. M.

"I have just returned from the field, and find your dispatch in regard to Jackson. Several contrabands just in, giving information confirming the supposition that Jackson's advance is at or near Hanover Court House, and that Beauregard arrived, with strong re-enforcements, in Richmond yesterday.

"I incline to think that Jackson will attack my right and

[3] Flower, *Stanton*, XXXVIII, XXXIX.
[4] *History of the Civil War*, II, 73.
[5] *Ibid.*, 112.

rear. The rebel force is stated at 200,000, including Jackson and Beauregard. I shall have to contend against vastly superior odds if these reports be true; but this army will do all in the power of men to hold their position and repulse any attack.

"I regret my great inferiority in numbers, but feel that I am in no way responsible for it, as I have not failed to represent repeatedly the necessity of re-enforcements; that this was the decisive point, and that all the available means of the Government should be concentrated here. I will do all that a general can do with the splendid army I have the honor to command, and if it is destroyed by overwhelming numbers, can at least die with it and share its fate. But if the result of the action, which will probably occur to-morrow, or within a short time, is a disaster, the responsibility cannot be thrown on my shoulders; it must rest where it belongs.

"Since I commenced this I have received additional intelligence confirming the supposition in regard to Jackson's movements and Beauregard's arrival. I shall probably be attacked to-morrow, and now go to the other side of the Chickahominy to arrange for the defense on that side. I feel that there is no use in again asking for re-enforcements.

"GEO. B. McCLELLAN,
"Major-General."

In this telegram, as the reader has noted, the general urgently pressed upon the Secretary that of all the military field of operation this was the decisive point; that the Southerners so recognized it and were confronting him with a great army, and that, following their example, all the available means of the Government should be concentrated there. The wisdom of this course is now too obvious for debate. The Government had ample troops in the Eastern Military District to make his army irresistible. General Imboden asserts that there were 90,000 Union soldiers scattered over Northern Virginia at that time, who the Confederates naturally expected would rush to McClellan if allowed to do so, and the

editors of *Battles and Leaders*[6] seem to concede that there were 80,000. But beyond this, the garrison of Washington should have been drawn upon (as it was for General Grant) and Burnside hurried up the Pamunkey to meet the emergency. The only sure way to protect every other point was to strengthen McClellan. That such prompt action, in accordance with McClellan's repeated appeals, would have extinguished the rebellion in 1862 no thoughtful author, Northern or Southern, has now any doubt.

McClellan was astride the Chickahominy,—under protest, reluctantly, by force of an order from which he was in daily expectation of release,—and he swiftly seized the first opportunity to escape from so perilous a position to one of his own selection.

And yet many thoughtless writers condemn the position as a mark of military incapacity,—treating it as if it had been of his own choosing. No doubt this view came from Mr. Stanton. It was Stanton who forced McClellan there by a peremptory order and then charged him with incapacity for being there.

In June, as in May, the flooding rains continued. On the 3d the President, fearing disaster from the continuous downpour, wired McClellan. On June 2d the general was told again that McDowell was coming. And now it seems as if the inclement weather was in some degree melting the heart of the general's enemies in the Capital, for on June the 5th Mr. Stanton tells him that he will ship some of McDowell's force and five new regiments. This meant McCall's division and the new regiments. On the 7th floods covered the country; but work on the bridges was diligently pushed, the men standing in water to their waists. McClellan was resolved to attack Richmond as soon as McCall should arrive and the roads become usable, but on the 10th all plans were completely checkmated by weather which made roads and fields impassable, as the rain fell heavily almost every day. On June the 8th eleven regiments came, 4,000 men. On June the 10th McCall arrived with 9,500 men; on June the 11th Mr. Stan-

[6] II, 285.

ton wired that the residue of McDowell's corps would also join him, overland. By June the 25th all the bridges and entrenchments were completed, and an advance of the picket line of the left wing was ordered, preparatory to a general forward movement on McDowell's arrival. Why he did not come no apologist for the Administration, or more precisely for Mr. Stanton, has ever been able to explain. On the 26th, at 6 P. M., he was still coming. Why he did not come even then has never been told. But the bloody week of battle was then fully entered upon. It began with an engagement at Oak Grove on Wednesday, June 25, 1862. On the 26th at 12:30 P. M. McClellan's pickets on his right wing were driven in; at 3 the grand assault of the battle of Beaver Dam was begun, and one of the longest, fiercest continuous struggles of the war was in full career.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE WEEK OF BATTLE—BEAVER DAM—OFF FOR THE JAMES—GAINES'S MILL

At 6 P. M. of Thursday the 26th of June came the last notice to McClellan that McDowell was coming.

But three hours earlier had come the hot onset of the most valiant sons of the South. The week of battle had already commenced. To be strictly correct, it had begun with the engagement at Oak Grove on the 25th, for that was a stubborn struggle, as we have seen, lasting a whole day; and counting Oak Grove, there was a week of fighting.

It was no surprise,—in its coming, in its continuance, or in its fierceness.

In that season of almost incessant rain the 26th of June was so bright and lovely that the Federal generals looked forward confidently to the first blow at Richmond, which was fixed for the 27th, if the weather proved gracious.

General Porter says: "On the 25th the pickets of the left main army south of the Chickahominy were pushed forward under strong opposition, and, after sharp fighting, gained considerable ground, so as to enable the Second and Third Corps (Sumner's and Heintzelman's) to support the attack on Old Tavern which it was intended to make next day with the Sixth Corps (Franklin's). The result of the fighting was to convince the corps commanders engaged that there had been no reduction of forces in their front to take part in any movement upon our right flank."

But the fertile mind of the commander as early as June 23d foresaw that the anticipated attack on his right wing, if it should come before he could strike, might present an opening by leaving a slender force between him and Richmond; and, accordingly, on that day he issued this order to General

Porter: "Your dispositions of your troops are approved by the commanding general. . . . If you are attacked, be careful to state as promptly as possible the number, composition, and position of the enemy. The troops on this side will be held ready either to support you directly or to attack the enemy in their front. If the force attacking you is large, the general would prefer the latter course, counting upon your skill and the admirable troops under your command to hold their own against superior numbers long enough for him to make the decisive movement which will determine the fate of Richmond." [1]

Porter's corps was posted behind strong redoubts on the Eastern bluffs of Beaver Dam Creek, close to its union with the Chickahominy. The stream was three to four feet deep and fringed with swamps in conformity with the settled custom of streams in that locality. Its passage was difficult for men; impossible for artillery. The plains in front forced an assaulting force to present both front and flank to the Federal fire.

General Reynolds's division commanded the road leading from Mechanicsville, half a mile in front, to Bethesda Church, which lay behind and to the northeast, while General Seymour's division was farther south across the road leading from Ellerson's Mill to Gaines's Mill. This brought Seymour's left near to the mouth and Reynolds's right near to the head of the creek. These bodies made up what was called the Pennsylvania Reserves, under the command of General McCall. Behind Seymour was stationed the brigade of General George C. Meade; behind Reynolds was General Griffin's brigade. Generals Martindale, Butterfield, and Sykes were also on the field.

Incidentally General Porter, in his account of the battle, illustrates the advanced methods and military acumen of General McClellan, as the result of which every part of the army was in touch with every other part and with the commander. "Sitting for hours near the telegraph operator at my quarters, prior to the attack, I listened to the constant and rapid ticking

[1] *Battles and Leaders*, II, 328.

of his instrument and was kept informed, by the various intercommunicating messages at the headquarters of the army, of the condition of affairs in front of the three corps furthest to the left." General A. P. Hill's division of the Confederate army came upon Porter's outposts at Meadow Bridge over the Chickahominy, three miles up the river, about noon. The boom of a Federal cannon at two o'clock informed General Porter that the foe was crossing the Chickahominy, and a warm reception was promptly arranged for him.

It was about an hour later that the enemy in great bodies under Generals Longstreet, D. H. Hill, and A. P. Hill actually crossed the river, making use of the Mechanicsville Bridge, Meadow Bridge, and others. After reaching Mechanicsville the forces of D. H. Hill and Longstreet took the Bethesda road, which brought them against General Reynolds's position. Apparently they did not realize the power of the numerous batteries which the master of artillery had arrayed for the defense of his right wing. Converging upon the advancing columns were all the guns of Reynolds and Seymour and the batteries of Kern, Cooper, Smead, DeHart, Easton, and Edwards. The assaulting columns "moved on with animation and confidence, as if going to parade or engaging in a sham battle." They were encouraged in this perhaps by the stillness of the bluffs, for the guns were dumb until the heads of the assaulting forces were close to the creek. Then came a hell of converging fire of both artillery and infantry from the whole Union line, so swift, so deadly, that it seemed to consume the hostile divisions in an instant, and the amazed survivors hastened back beyond Mechanicsville, as if expecting immediate pursuit.

The column under A. P. Hill was not more fortunate. Its assault upon Seymour was two hours later. This wide separation of the attacks was surely not intentional. It enabled all the Federal fire to be concentrated first upon the advance by the upper road, and next, long afterward, upon the advance by the lower road; it enabled the Union soldiers to supply themselves anew with ammunition, as they had consumed all they had in the first onset; then, too, it gave them

time for rest and refreshment, so that they met the second assault with renewed energy and vigor; but, above all, was the advantage of using their full united strength against a section only of the enemy. A. P. Hill's division suffered even more severely than their comrades of the upper road, but they were more pertinacious, for, greatly strengthened, they made a second effort much later in the afternoon and with such dash and bravery that some reached the stream. But their courage was wasted, and those whom fate permitted to live, fell back in baffled fury. Then night came. The battle was over, and in its wake came the natural sequel of such a struggle. The shrieks of the wounded and the moans of the dying filled all the night with horror. The Federal forces at Beaver Dam numbered 30,000, the Confederates 65,000; the former lost 256 men, the latter 1,484 men.

Beaver Dam was a bloody repulse for the Confederates.

As it was clear that the whole force of the Confederate army was not massed there, and as there was no evidence of any weakening of the lines in front of Keyes, Heintzelman, Sumner, and Franklin, there was no encouragement to attempt the carrying out of the second programme,—the advance of the left wing upon Richmond.

The attack at Beaver Dam set McClellan free, under the law of military necessity, from Stanton's order of May the 18th. The right wing and the right rear of his army were threatened, which meant the intervention of the rebel army between him and his base of supplies.

Should he await a second attack or start for the James at once? He saw the great likelihood of a rear attack on the following day, and, having pointed out to General Porter a favorable new position east of Powhite Creek, six miles down the Chickahominy, he later sent directions to move there. McClellan left General Barnard, the chief military engineer, to advise as to details. When the latter was leaving, General Porter expressed a desire for a supply of axes to slash the timber at certain points, so that the artillery would have an unimpeded command of every avenue of approach, as it had had at Beaver Dam. General Barnard promised that

he himself would furnish the axes. He was also entrusted with a message to General McClellan, urging the imperative need of reinforcements. General Porter, because of the excellent reputation borne by General Barnard as an engineer and because of his high rank, confidently expected that these requests would be faithfully transmitted.

General Barnard did not supply any axes and did not carry the message to McClellan. In his official report [2] he states that when he returned to headquarters he learned that the commander was reposing, and he then went to his own tent and remained there until the afternoon. The serious effect of his amazing negligence will appear a little later.

The new field of battle was on the east bank of a little creek extending like the arc of a circle from the Chickahominy to Elder Swamp. The order to move came at 3 A. M., and before sunrise the Fifth Corps was on the new battle-ground.

[2] *Official Record*, XI, I, 118.

CHAPTER XL

GAINES'S MILL—THE UNITED ARMY

The position was strong; but for absolute defense against a great force it required more men than General Porter had. During the removal to the new scene of battle he telegraphed to the commander: "I hope to do without aid, though I request that Franklin or some other commander be held ready to reinforce me. The enemy is so close that I expect to be hard pressed in front. I hope to have a portion in position to cover the retreat. This is a delicate movement, but relying on the good qualities of the commanders of divisions and brigades, I expect to get back and hold the new line."

General Porter's troops were arranged in the formation from left to right, as follows: Butterfield, Martindale, and Griffin, with Robertson's, Allen's, Weeden's, and Martin's batteries, of Morell's division, forming the left wing; Warren and Buchanan, with Edward's, Weed's, Tidball's, and Kingsbury's batteries, of Sykes's division, forming the right wing. Some distance behind Morell were Meade, Seymour, and Reynolds, with Kern's, Easton's, DeHart's, and Cooper's batteries, of McCall's division. The credulous reader who has been led by various writers into the notion that the Confederates never used anything in warfare so harsh and cruel as ordnance, that they confined themselves to wooden cannon, as we are gravely told was the case at Manassas and Yorktown, will be interested in looking at the plan of any battle in Virginia from Bull Run on, to observe the great number of the rebel batteries and the evident importance which was given to this feature in every plan of attack. 'Twas a merry quip, to charge the generals of Dixie with excluding artillery from their military appliances, when we reflect that all these leaders, both of the North and of the South, gained

their ideas of conducting war while they were comrades, schoolfellows, boon companions, chums, in many instances sitting together on the same benches and listening to the same instructors, all on the banks of the Hudson; that they were all of that class much derided by Mr. Stanton and his followers,—graduates of West Point,—and that West Point was always a strong advocate of artillery. Little did those warm-hearted boys think in their days of military training that they were learning to destroy one another.

When the Confederate forces were placed in position, Longstreet with a part of Jackson's troops were on the right; Whiting and A. P. Hill held the center; and D. H. Hill, Ewell, and the main portion of Jackson's troops, the left. Thus D. H. Hill confronted Sykes. Of this General Hill says: "One of the saddest things connected with the miserable, fratricidal war, was the breaking up of ties of friendship and of blood. The troops opposing mine on that murderous field that day, were the regulars of General George Sykes, a Southerner by birth, and my roommate at West Point:—a man admired by all for his honor, courage, and frankness, and peculiarly endeared to me by his social qualities." [1]

The battle began on the Federal left about two o'clock and raged for two hours, with great loss to the enemy. For the next two hours the attack was chiefly on the Federal right, with a like result; but about 6:30 P. M. a grand assault was made all along the line at once, and was everywhere repulsed until after sunset. Porter's men were now nearly exhausted and almost without ammunition. Slocum's division had arrived about four o'clock, and the three brigades were placed in various separate positions where they could be most serviceable. The Confederates had discovered that Morell's center was the most hopeful point of attack, because here the Federal artillery had less play, as the woods held by the enemy came closer to the Federal line and the remaining space was too little to get the full benefit of the discharge. On this point, then, its forces were mainly concentrated for a final effort. It was an assault all along the line, but with the greatest

[1] *Battles and Leaders*, II, 359.

fierceness at this particular point. It was everywhere repulsed; but, in the last thin light of the day, fresh regiments were now massed and poured in in swift succession and were again thrown back at all points but this; and here Morell's line was broken, which necessitated a retirement both of Morell's and Sykes's divisions to the second line, just behind the Adams House. The brigades of Meagher and French came in good time to assist Sykes's division in covering this retirement, which had not at all the aspect of a panic; and the enemy were not able to pursue the advantage farther nor to prevent the withdrawal of all but nineteen guns. During the night the movement toward the James was resumed, all the forces being brought across the river, and the whole army was now once more united.

At the battle of Gaines's Mill there were 129 Confederate regiments, 19 batteries, and about 65,000 men; and 50 Union regiments, 20 batteries (not all engaged), and about 30,000 men. The result of General Barnard's failure to supply the axes asked for and promised is made plain by the above account of the battle.

Colonel Powell, who was there, is of the opinion that "the results reached leave no room for doubt that had the reinforcements requested by General Porter, through General John G. Barnard, been received in time for assignment to position and particularly had the axes promised (but not sent) by General Barnard been available for use in the necessary defensive preparations, the line would have been maintained to the irreparable damage of the enemy. Having held at bay for six hours at least twice their own force, there is no one who can doubt that if the axes had been furnished and the timber under which the enemy massed for attack been slashed, a complete repulse of the Confederates would have followed." [2]

As an illustration of what boldness may achieve, Colonel Thomas Cass, with the 9th Massachusetts Volunteers, "held up" all that part of the Confederate army advancing under General A. P. Hill against Morell from 12:30 P. M. until nearly 2 o'clock, and large bodies of troops had to be brought

[2] *Fifth Army Corps*, 122.

into action to overcome the insolent defiance of this stubborn band of Irish-Americans.

General McClellan first learned of General Porter's request for troops at 2 P. M. and ordered up Slocum's division at once. It was too late then to use the axes, and his active efforts to supply further reinforcements are set out in his *Own Story*.[3] The two generals were in constant communication by wire throughout the battle. French and Meagher were ordered up about five o'clock. The other corps commanders,—Sumner, Keyes, Heintzelman, and Franklin,—were strongly apprehensive of an attack on the Federal left wing and disinclined to release any troops. It is characteristic of McClellan's wise foresight that by his orders three batteries of General W. F. Smith's division played during the battle with much effect upon the attacking forces from the opposite bank of the Chickahominy, and from their favorable position signaled suggestions to General Porter as to the fire of his own batteries.

[3] 420, 421.

CHAPTER XLI

ONE DAY'S RESPITE—THE FOE MISLED—M'CLELLAN DENOUNCES STANTON

McClellan was moving toward the James. He was not retreating, nor was he flying there with a routed host of men, abandoning artillery and trains and supplies and dropping their guns and knapsacks as they ran. He was going where he had always wished to go. He was moving toward the James in the presence of, and despite the fiercest efforts of, an army much greater than his own in numbers, as we shall prove, and made up of superb fighting material. He was moving toward the James, not over a hard, smooth plain, but over a swampy country most difficult to traverse, and bringing with him safe to the end of the journey the tents and equipments and supplies and ordnance and all the usual impedimenta of a large army,—over 4,000 wagons, 350 guns, and 2,500 cattle (not one of which escaped),—a daring enterprise, admirably executed, as even the most virulent critics admit. "The presumption in favor of the idea that McClellan's right was extended on the north bank of the Chickahominy for the purpose of connecting with McDowell's force when the latter should move down from the Rappahannock, is so strong that, even if we did not have the emphatic statements of McClellan himself and his confidants in support of it, the minor evidence to the opposite effect does not appear sufficient to overthrow it. The unfortunate position of the army was due to two counteracting influences at work,—one being McClellan's desire to move to the James, and the other the desire of the civil authorities for a more or less direct covering of Washington. Lee's attack on McClellan's right set the Union commander free to go where he wanted to go. Lee's attack on the Pennsylvania Reserves at Mechanicsville was made on June 26.

But on the 18th McClellan had ordered supplies sent up the James. The movement to the James was already under way when Lee attacked at Mechanicsville, a Union victory which certainly gave McClellan no cause to hurry." [1] On the night of the 27th of June for the first time the commander gathered his chiefs about him and explained his plans.

Unreflecting writers say that as the battle of Beaver Dam was so successful, why did he withdraw? The answer is obvious. McClellan under the order of May 18th was bound to remain where he was until attacked. He could not anticipate an attack and withdraw to West Point. Moreover, that would have been equivalent to being driven back and would have supplied a pretext for recalling the army; and after he was actually attacked it would have been fatal to the army to attempt a movement in that direction, for the enemy was between him and his goal and disaster would have been inevitable. But let us suppose that he could accomplish such a movement without loss and without reproach. What good would have come of it? His military genius very early recognized what is now universally admitted, that the true base of action against Richmond was on the James. This was afterward demonstrated, for it was from there finally that the quietus was put to the rebellion. So why should he have retreated when he felt confident that he could successfully advance his army to the position he had longed for,—the Mount of Victory, surely, if the civil powers had only listened to him?

In a report that General Johnston sent to Richmond on the 14th of May, 1862, he concludes his views on the military situation with these prophetic words: "The danger is on the south side of the James River." [2]

McClellan was abandoned to his fate, his requests disregarded. He was left unsupported, when McDowell could easily have reached him by water and even by land.

All the indignities, all the malevolence of Stanton, had

[1] *Dial*, XXXI, 320, 321.
[2] *Battles and Leaders*, II, 222.

been borne by McClellan with a patience which was misplaced and misunderstood.

The result of an inadequate force, as he had always pointed out and as the sequel proved would be the case, was an unnecessary sacrifice of men. If the army of McDowell had reached him in proper time, the week of battle would never have come to him. It was his abandoned and tempting position which led to it, and which caused the loss of so many thousands of the brave fellows who loved him and whom he loved with the greatest tenderness. On June 23d he wrote to his wife: "You may be sure that no man in this army is so anxious as its general to finish the campaign. Every poor fellow that is killed or wounded almost haunts me." [3] After three fierce battles at Fair Oaks, Beaver Dam, and Gaines's Mill he could not help feeling that he owed to the hostile attitude of Stanton the death of the thousands who had been killed. At this time he was thoroughly convinced of the personal enmity of the Secretary of War, and, despite the latter's crafty duplicity, fresh proofs came frequently. McClellan urged the concentration of all the forces in Northern Virginia. They should have been united with the Army of the Potomac under McClellan's command, as is obvious now. His advice was followed. The troops of Northern Virginia were united, but the command was given to General John Pope, who was known to have no sympathy with McClellan's views. And this appointment made on June 26th meant, as McClellan said, that McDowell was not to come at all,—an opinion that was fully verified later. Stanton, in McClellan's mind, was morally responsible for the great slaughter of soldiers not only because he had withheld McDowell, but also, and chiefly because he had forced the army into a position so extended and weak that the Confederates were incited to the fiercest efforts because of their belief that the army could not possibly escape destruction.

Under such circumstances, and impelled by such maddening provocation and, above all, by the sight of the dead and the screams of the wounded on the night of the battle of

[3] McClellan, *Own Story*, 408.

Gaines's Mill, he prepared a despatch, which was sent off a little after midnight (being then the 28th),—as follows:

"HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
"SAVAGE STATION,
"June 28, 1862, 12:20 A. M.

"HON. E. M. STANTON, Secretary of War:

"I now know the full history of the day. On this side of the river (the right bank) we repulsed several strong attacks. On the left bank our men did all that men could do, all that soldiers could accomplish, but they were overwhelmed by vastly superior numbers, even after I brought my last reserves into action. The loss on both sides is terrible. I believe it will prove to be the most desperate battle of the war. The sad remnants of my men behave as men. Those battalions who fought most bravely and suffered most are still in the best order. My regulars were superb, and I count upon what are left to turn another battle in company with their gallant comrades of the volunteers. Had I twenty thousand (20,000), or even ten thousand (10,000), fresh troops to use to-morrow, I could take Richmond; but I have not a man in reserve, and shall be glad to cover my retreat and save the material and personnel of the army.

"If we have lost the day we have yet preserved our honor, and no one need blush for the Army of the Potomac. I have lost this battle because my force was too small.

"I again repeat that I am not responsible for this, and I say it with the earnestness of a general who feels in his heart the loss of every brave man who has been needlessly sacrificed to-day. I still hope to retrieve our fortunes; but to do this, the government must view the matter in the same earnest light that I do. You must send me very large reinforcements, and send them at once. I shall draw back to this side of the Chickahominy, and think I can withdraw all our material. Please understand that in this battle we have lost nothing but men, and those the best we have.

"In addition to what I have already said, I only wish to say to the President that I think he is wrong in regarding

me as ungenerous when I said that my force was too weak. I merely intimated a truth which to-day has been too plainly proved. If, at this instant, I could dispose of ten thousand (10,000) fresh men, I could gain the victory to-morrow.

"I know that a few thousand more men would have changed this battle from a defeat to a victory. As it is, the government must not and cannot hold me responsible for the result.

"I feel too earnestly to-night. I have seen too many dead and wounded comrades to feel otherwise than that the government has not sustained this army. If you do not do so now the game is lost.

"If I save this army now, I tell you plainly that I owe no thanks to you or to any other persons in Washington.

"You have done your best to sacrifice this army.

"G. B. McCLELLAN." [4]

This telegram has been severely criticised, because of misunderstanding or political fanaticism. It seems to me that any unbiased and judicious reader would say that it is clearly evident that the writer was an energetic, forceful, aggressive man. The motive of the telegram is found in this sentence, "I again repeat that I am not responsible for this, and I say it with the earnestness of a general who feels in his heart the loss of every brave man who has been needlessly sacrificed to-day."

The telegram is brave, manly, noble. How any one can consider wanting in courage, in spirit, and in aggressiveness the man who could write such a message to another who held him in his power passes my comprehension. From a lawyer's standpoint, all it lacks is *craft;* that is, worldly wisdom, which, while it would have confessed his vassalage, would also have brought home to his masters his recognition of their responsibilities and of their precarious tenure of the authority they were abusing. An experienced lawyer, keeping in mind that he was dealing with men who owed their elevated stations to their astuteness as lawyers, would have directed his attention to the easily demonstrable fact that the

[4] *Official Record,* XI, 1, 61.

communications which he received from Washington were composed much more for the press and for the people than for him. They were in many instances lawyers' briefs, to make him appear at fault for the inevitable result of their own acts. They were not directions so much as arguments. If McClellan had been guided by a Stantonian adviser, his telegram would have been equally astute. It would have *said* nothing of responsibilities, but it would have *shown* the responsibilities of the Government; and instead of making a blunt statement that Stanton had done his best to sacrifice the army it would have demonstrated, by a skilful array of indisputable facts, that but for the idiocy or cowardice or treason of his civil superiors the war would probably have been at an end more than two months before. It would have made clear to the public the various hostile acts of the War Department and their injurious effects upon the public welfare. It would have shown the slackness and folly of the Government in not following his advice to raise an ample army quickly, and that as the result of that slackness and folly he was now in a hostile country and greatly outnumbered.

It would have shown the necessity of one head for all the armies; it would have shown that but for the loss of his supreme control as general-in-chief he would have kept the rebel forces busy everywhere, instead of letting them concentrate extraordinary strength for a time at Richmond; that he would have gathered all the forces at Baltimore and Washington and Fortress Monroe (save small garrisons) and throughout Virginia into one army; and that, keeping his plan of advance secret, he would have landed at Urbanna while Johnston was still at Manassas and cut his communications. Without putting his charges in plain words, McClellan should nevertheless have clearly pictured the disingenuous, uncandid, and furtive acts of those that composed the Administration; their want of dignity and common courtesy; the acts inimical to the public good that had been done without consulting him and without notifying him that they were in contemplation; the taking away of his office as general-in-chief when he most needed that authority, as if he did not deserve to hold so high a posi-

tion, when in fact he had nearly lost his life by his labors in creating the best army this country had ever possessed. His letter would have shown that his army organization had been interfered with and that unfriendly corps commanders had been appointed without his knowledge. It would have shown the folly and the perils of the overland route to Richmond and the unpatriotic and disingenuous measures taken to compel him to adopt it. It would have shown the death-blow given to all his calculations by the detachment of one-third of the army, when it should have been doubled instead of being divided. It would have shown that he was deprived of a factor equally indispensable to undelayed progress in the loss of naval aid, when a simple direction from the President to the Secretary of the Navy would have secured such aid; and finally it would have shown that the Government had closed the recruiting offices at a time when clearly additions to his force were necessary, as he had been robbed of one-third of his men; and that, even though he had had the full number he expected, it was plain that the Government should have stood ready to keep his regiments replenished with fresh recruits as the ravages of battle reduced them.

Then, again, that telegram should have pictured the army at the gates of Richmond, despite all obstacles, handicaps, and disheartening discouragements of rain and bog; it should have repeated the order which put him in a position courting destruction; it should have shown that inasmuch as 15,000 of his force had swept away all obstructions and could have joined McDowell without the slightest trouble, so McDowell with equal ease could have joined him, and that then the Union army would at once have become a compact body, there would have been no isolated left wing, the battle of Fair Oaks would never have been fought, the Union army would have struck the first blow, and the fall of Richmond would have been quick and inevitable, with small loss to his army. The telegram should have been like Mark Antony's address, courteous but irresistible. The Government would not have dared to plead guilty to the indictment, and the only avenue of disproof open to it would have been an earnest and

cordial support, which would have ensured a glorious conclusion of the campaign.

McClellan was neither lawyer enough nor politician enough to write such a telegram. That its influence would have been dynamic is shown by the effect of his message even as it was.

Some historians are persuaded that Mr. Stanton's enmity to the commander dates from, and was created by, this telegram. Mr. Flower, on the contrary, convinces us of his earnest belief, at least, on very plausible grounds, that Mr. Stanton never knew of the offensive concluding sentence. But with substantial unanimity the writers agree that Stanton was averse to McClellan from the moment, or almost from the moment, he entered office. The evidence of this has been already given. On the other hand, Mr. Flower, despite his good faith, is probably mistaken, as we discover from Mr. Welles: "With the change in the War Department in January, 1862, came the hostility of Secretary Stanton to McClellan, then general-in-chief." [5]

That McClellan outwitted his adversary, who was thereby thrown off the scent for a whole day, is admitted by the Southern historians.[6] "The Rebels had cut off McClellan's supplies from White House and confidently calculated on cutting off his retreat." [7] "The Confederates made a disastrous mistake. They thought that McClellan would retreat by the route he came, and so remained where they were for twenty-four hours." [8]

Try to imagine McClellan's feelings on this day, filled as he was with hot indignation and just resentment because the weakness or the fear or the hostility of the Government had kept McDowell's corps from him, when, as is now admitted with practical unanimity, there was nothing to prevent their union and every reason to believe that Richmond would have been swiftly captured. All the Federal troops scattered over

[5] *Lincoln and Seward*, 479.

[6] Pollard, *Lost Cause*, 294; Eggleston, *War in the Confederate States*, I, 409.

[7] Eggleston, *War in the Confederate States*, I, 402.

[8] *Ibid.*, 409.

Virginia should have been united with his army in any way he might direct. These troops should all have been sent with him, but waiving that point, as the constant panic of the rulers of the people stood in the way of it, they should have been hurried to him overland all the more energetically.

A most interesting feature, which we will elaborate in speaking of the campaign as a whole, was the discovery by the Government while it was in progress that the march to the James was a deliberately planned movement, not a repulse nor a retreat. This fact and the effect of it seem to have been wholly overlooked by the writers on the Peninsula Campaign. When the Confederates found on the morning of the 27th that the Union army was leaving Beaver Dam, in spite of the successful result of the battle there, the action could have had but one meaning for them: notwithstanding their victory "the Yanks" were demoralized. This conviction inspired the attacking columns to extraordinary persistence at Gaines's Mill, and, having driven the Federals back some distance, and the latter having during the night retired a second time, the Confederates naturally concluded that McClellan's army would next attempt to reach West Point or Fortress Monroe, and accordingly the 28th of June was wasted by General Lee in an effort to intercept the expected retreat. The foe was misled, and this gave the Union army twenty-four hours' start toward the James, as the historians say; but it was more than that, for such fierce fighting as took place at Beaver Dam and Gaines's Mill was not seen again until two days later at Glendale. This was a respite brought about by McClellan's military sagacity.

CHAPTER XLII

SUNDAY, JUNE 29TH—ALLEN'S FIELD—SAVAGE STATION—MONDAY, JUNE 30TH, GLENDALE OR FRAZIER'S FARM

These were days and nights when McClellan's wonderful administrative ability and capacity for detail shone most brilliantly. He worked unsparingly both day and night,—directing battles, directing marches and the movements of trains, forestalling, with a sagacity which was approved by the results, the interference of the enemy with his plans; now supervising a battle, and in constant touch through his admirable telegraphic arrangements with all his generals in every quarter; now blocking an avenue of approach to the Confederates; now on the James, conferring with the naval squadron; now on Malvern Hill, planning the crowning struggle. Nothing was neglected; nothing slighted. He was wise, prudent, brave, skilful, with a mind which grasped everything down to the minutest detail and with an energy which governed all.

But minute particulars as to the movement of the army would be neither of value nor of interest to the reader.

The 28th was spent in getting the trains over Live Oak Swamp. An attack from the full force of the Southern army during this tedious and delicate undertaking would have been exceedingly undesirable. A trifling engagement between a few regiments at Golding's Farm was the only thing that broke the quiet of the day.

General Keyes's corps took the advance to the James, followed by General Porter.

On Sunday, the 29th of June, active hostilities were resumed, when General Sumner, who occupied the post nearest to Richmond, withdrew at daylight and halted at Allen's Field, between Orchard and Savage Stations. Here a vigorous assault was made about 9 A. M., first on the right wing held

by Sedgwick, and then on the left wing held by Richardson. This double assault was thrice repeated, but without any success, the enemy being forced back in disorder at every charge.

Early on the 29th General Keyes's corps, being relieved at Savage Station by General Slocum, started for the James River, and reached there early on the morning of the 30th.

About noon of the 29th Generals Sumner and Franklin united their forces at Savage Station in anticipation of an attack in force. If General Heintzelman had held the Williamsburg road as directed by General McClellan, the advance of the enemy would have been barred; but through some misapprehension he withdrew, and this left the way open to them. The expected onset came about 4 P. M. and continued with great vigor until the coming on of night, when the enemy retired, having made no impression. Here the tables were turned on "Prince John" Magruder, for Sumner, whose corps enabled the army trains to pass over White Oak Swamp unmolested, kept up such a clatter that it seemed to the Confederates that the whole Federal army was in front of them.

On the morning of the 30th of June General Franklin was stationed at the Southern end of the bridge at White Oak Swamp, with Richardson's division and Naglee's brigade added to his own corps, by General McClellan's sagacious prevision, to block the approach of any Confederate force from that direction or along the Charles City road. This prudent measure crippled the Confederate operations of the day, for Jackson and D. H. Hill and Huger were to fall upon the rear of the Federal forces under Sumner and Heintzelman at Glendale (Frazier's Farm) while Longstreet and A. P. Hill assailed the Union front. But having a prior engagement with General Franklin, the redoubtable Jackson found it impossible to be present; for, despite the most persistent efforts continued from noon until dark, he could not pass the swamp, and Huger was blocked on the road. As the result, Generals Jackson and D. H. Hill and Huger, with their five divisions, were unavoidably absent from the fourth great battle of the campaign.

While General Franklin was riding toward the swamp that

morning, as he says, a terrible artillery fire opened from the opposite side, the severity of which he had never heard equaled. It was the first intimation of Jackson's arrival and it came from a masked battery of thirty-one guns located in the dense woods. The trees around General Franklin seemed torn to pieces by round shot and exploding shells.[1]

An interesting incident comes to us from General D. H. Hill. The Federals fired one volley from their field-guns and made off. Mumford's 2d Virginia Cavalry crossed the swamp, and Generals Jackson and Hill crossed with them, to discover where the enemy had gone. As General Hill quaintly puts it, they soon found out. The Union batteries had merely retired to a strip of woods, where they were perfectly sheltered from the rebel cannonade and yet could sweep the broken bridge and all approaches. The cavalry regiment were treated to a terrific shower of grape and canister, and returned to their own side of the swamp with more speed than dignity. "Fast riding in the wrong direction," quoth General Hill, "is not military, but is sometimes healthy."[2]

No more attempts were made to cross the swamp on that day. It was cooler on the other side. While these five divisions were so detained Longstreet and A. P. Hill were hurrying along the Long Bridge road to seize the Quaker road, on which the Federal army and its trains were moving toward the James. If this movement had succeeded, the Union Army would have been cut in two; but about a mile from the Quaker road General McClellan had placed an obstruction. It was Heintzelman's corps and Sumner, with Sedgwick's division. McCall's division was in advance of all, and was overwhelmed and driven back by the great mass of the enemy pouring upon him. As the latter was in pursuit, Hooker's division, which was on McCall's left, attacked the right flank of the hostile force and, being then assisted by General Sumner on the opposite flank, repulsed the attack. Troops returning from White Oak Swamp were in time to give valuable aid.

[1] *Battles and Leaders*, II, 377, 378.
[2] *Ibid.*, 387, 388.

This is described by General Sumner as a very furious contest, lasting from three o'clock until dark, and "the enemy was routed at all points and driven from the field." [3] That night all the troops from White Oak Swamp and Glendale reached Malvern Hill.

Referring to the action at Glendale, Swinton says: "While these events were passing at Glendale, Jackson, detained by the vigorous opposition he met on the other side of White Oak Swamp, could only hear the tell-tale guns: he was impotent to help. Thus it was that McClellan, holding paralyzed, as it were, the powerful corps of Jackson with his right hand, with his left was free to deal blows at the force menacing his flanks. The action at Glendale insured the integrity of the army, imperilled till that hour. During the night the troops that had checked Jackson and repulsed Longstreet, silently withdrew, and when Lee was next able to strike, it was at a united army, strongly posted on the heights of Malvern, with assured communication with its new base on the James." [4]

[3] *Official Record*, XI, 167.
[4] *Army of the Potomac*, 159.

CHAPTER XLIII

MALVERN HILL—THE FINAL STRUGGLE

Some days before the army reached the James, General McClellan had inspected the vicinity of the river and, anticipating pursuit, had fixed upon Malvern Hill as a suitable place to assemble his weary but now united army, to meet the last desperate effort to overpower him. This was his first chance in the Peninsula to select his ground and use all his troops. Having been controlled by Mr. Stanton's order of May 18th, which had forced him into a false and weak position, he had waged battle on the Chickahominy, always and unavoidably, with only a part of his army and against greatly superior numbers. If there had been no order of May 18th and no hope held out of the coming of McDowell, he would have gone to the James long before, and so would have avoided the floods and swamps of the Chickahominy, the enfeebling of the army from disease and overwork, and the sacrifice of thousands, which had resulted from the senseless order. If the army which landed on the Peninsula had been then with him, fresh and undiminished, and, better still, if the full army of 156,000 men upon which he had based his plans had been around him ready for battle, with what high hopes he would have awaited the onset! As it was, he could only pray that he might be able to hurl back the heavy force which he felt sure would be dashed upon his left wing and so win rest and recuperation for his exhausted men.

Malvern Hill is a bare plateau, having an elevation of about sixty feet and being about a mile wide. Turkey Creek borders it on the west, and also on the south, about half a mile from the James. Here was a bend and widening of the river, which gave an excellent opportunity for the gunboats to assemble and aid in repelling an attack upon the Federal left

flank. This was a position admirably selected, as the critics agree. If General Lee had rightly interpreted the withdrawal of McClellan from Beaver Dam and Gaines's Mill, this excellent engineer and able general would have forestalled him at Malvern before the Union army, with its heavy trains, could have reached it; but the day lost on the false scent prevented this.

Even as it was, however, Porter had scarcely occupied it, as directed by the commander, when an attempt was made to dislodge him. But as the Southerners had found at Beaver Dam, Fitz John Porter was of a stubborn breed and "a very poor hand at running." He knew that "Little Mac" expected him to hold that hill, and he held it.

The Union left and centre occupied Malvern Hill; the right lay in a wooded region curving like the arc of a circle to the river, below Haxall's. General McClellan rightly judged that the force of the assailants would be chiefly expended upon the left flank. Here, therefore, he massed his troops and artillery. Here was Porter's corps, with his guns well posted. On higher ground was the artillery of the reserve, and on the crest of the hill ten siege guns. This presented a formidable array of ordnance. "Tier upon tier" the hill was "bristling with guns," as General D. H. Hill describes it. Next to Porter and to his right was Couch; then Sedgwick and Richardson; then Smith and Slocum; then the rest of Keyes's corps, extending to the James. McCall's division was behind Porter and Couch.

On the morning of the first of July, Lee, Longstreet, and D. H. Hill met at Willis Church on the Quaker road near Frazier's Farm. General Hill gave the commander a description of Malvern Hill, adding, "If General McClellan is there in force, we had better let him alone." Longstreet treated this suggestion with scorn, saying laughingly, "Don't get scared, now that we have got him whipped." This idea emboldened Lee to make the assault.[1] Observe the sequel. Longstreet, who urged the advance, should have been ordered to the assault, but he took no part in the battle; while D. H.

[1] *Battles and Leaders*, 391.

Hill, who tried to dissuade Lee from the attack, was directed to make it, and like a brave soldier did his utmost to win success.

The serious attack began at three o'clock, when a brisk artillery fire was followed by an assault by General Anderson, of D. H. Hill's division, on Couch's front. Couch's men reserved their fire until the enemy was quite near, when they poured in swift volleys, driving the enemy back seven or eight hundred yards. About four o'clock the first act was over, but not the battle. About six o'clock a furious cannonade began, directed against Porter and Couch, and then, successively, D. H. Hill, Magruder, and Huger hurled their columns against the Union center and left, but the fearful fire of the Union batteries and the effective aid of the infantry foiled every attempt to capture the hill, and with appalling slaughter of the attacking forces; yet the brave and persistent efforts did not end until nine o'clock. The repulse was absolute, the Union victory complete. Some of his lieutenants urged that Malvern Hill be held and the enemy pursued, but the commander had wiser views. "Victorious though the army was on the field of Malvern, the position was one that could not be held, for the army was under the imperious necessity of reaching its supplies. During the night accordingly the troops were withdrawn to Harrison's Bar on the James." [2] Most of the trains were already there, having pursued their march on the night of the 30th of June and on the 1st of July. The exhaustion of food, forage, and ammunition made it necessary for the gallant but worn-out army to follow as soon as the battle ended.

The guarding of the trains was committed to General Keyes,—a difficult task that was admirably accomplished. The army wagons and vehicles of every kind would have covered forty miles, if they had been extended in a continuous line. From this consideration, the enterprise of bringing them safely from the Chickahominy can be more fully realized.

[2] Swinton, *Army of the Potomac*, 164.

CHAPTER XLIV

A GLORIOUS FIGHT

Probably nothing in the whole career of Mr. Stanton ever operated so perfectly to his satisfaction as his successful disparagement of the battles of the Peninsula Campaign. When we consider the numbers engaged, the condition of the territory in which the warfare was waged, the fury and persistence of the attacks, and the firmness and gallantry of the defence, and when, further, we consider that here for the only time during the war a Union commander contended against a heavy preponderance of numbers and yet inflicted upon his adversary a great preponderance of loss, it will be seen that the history of the war has no more notable battles to record, and, above all, none so glorious to the cause of the Union, in view of all the conditions. At Shiloh the largest number engaged was 87,000; at Chickamauga 110,000; at Gettysburg 150,000; at Chattanooga 100,000; while in the seven days' struggle the aggregate of the opposing armies, as we shall see, was over 225,000 men.

In view of all this, the scant attention paid to these fierce battles between the largest armies which ever met on this continent, in contrast with the treatment of the other battles mentioned, demonstrates the absolute success of Mr. Stanton's efforts.

The battles of this campaign were a surprise to the soldiers of Dixie. How was it that those whose total lack of valor was but a few months before a subject of ridicule and sneers could be so transformed? Every fight, every skirmish, had served to confirm and intensify their contempt for the hares of the Potomac; the courage shown at Williamsburg, West Point, and Hanover Court House was probably attributed to the exceptional bravery of special brigades.

At Fair Oaks they seemed to find the hares again in Casey's men; and the final failure no doubt was credited by the rebels to the bungling of their own leaders, in not properly utilizing all their forces. Nothing stimulates an effort to conquer so much as a firm conviction that the opponent is weak and cowardly. It was incredible that the men who had flown before them on the Potomac could withstand them now. Here lies the reason why the attacks were so desperate and persistent, in spite of bloody repulses, day after day for six days,—seven days of fighting,—if we begin with Oak Grove.

"The splendid fighting of his men was a tribute to the skill and genius with which he had created an effective army out of what he had described as 'regiments cowering on the banks of the Potomac, some perfectly raw, others dispirited by recent defeat, others going home.' Out of a disorganized and demoralized mass reinforced by utterly untrained civilians, McClellan had within a few months created an army capable of stubbornly contesting every inch of ground even when effecting a retreat, the very thought of which might well have disorganized an army." [1] In the seven days' struggle the army entered upon "a fight which knew no ceasing night or day." [2] The author tells us that this was due solely to McClellan's discipline and dominant influence. "Here was McClellan's reward; here was his glory. This army of his a few months before . . . would have broken into a panic-stricken rout." [3]

There is no more persistent and baseless error than the assertion by many writers that in his long fight with Lee the Union commander had vastly superior forces, and by others that he had a slight preponderance of numbers. The most recent writer on this period wanders furthest in assuring us that McClellan had about 100,000 men and that Lee had 30,000 less. I am satisfied that even in a statement so wild as this there is no malice nor deliberate mendacity, but the injury to truth is none the less grave and lamentable, and

[1] Eggleston, *History of the Confederate War*, I, 403.
[2] *Ibid.*, 404.
[3] *Ibid.*, 404.

it springs from a wholly insufficient research into easily accessible authorities. The marvel is where he could have found any inspiration for so baseless a statement. Surely not in the pages of Mr. Rhodes, to whom he pays a well-merited tribute,[4] nor in those of Mr. Swinton, nor of General Webb, nor of General Dodge, nor of Colonel Powell, nor of any of the many other writers mentioned in this work. While Mr. Stanton's influence was alive and active, the view was widely disseminated that McClellan's army largely outnumbered Lee's, but more recently the general impression has been that the armies were about equal, the advantage in numbers being with McClellan.

In Livermore's *Numbers and Losses in the Civil War* (1901) the numbers of the two armies at the beginning of the seven days is given as follows: Lee, 95,481; McClellan, 83,345. The difference is so small in proportion to the size of the armies that according to this author and many others the two armies might be regarded as practically equal; and, to be conservative, I shall so assume in presenting my conclusions notwithstanding the apparently irresistible evidence which I will now present that McClellan was entirely right in his belief that he was greatly overmatched in numbers. In the first place, the surrounding facts make it exceedingly probable. We have seen in Chapter VI that while Johnston was still at Manassas his army was reputed to be 100,000 strong. Let us assume that it was only 50,000 strong. At the same time there were 20,000 to 30,000 troops at Yorktown, Gloucester, and Norfolk as various Southern writers say, and of course some thousands at Richmond; but we will assume that there were then only 50,000 Confederates in all Virginia. Johnston left Manassas on the 9th of March to meet McClellan's expected coast advance, and in that same month, as we have learned, the Governor of Virginia called out the militia, 100,000 strong; but let us suppose that this brought only 50,000 men into the ranks. We have, then, at least 100,000 men; but this was not all. The Confederate leaders wisely felt that the situation was intensely critical,

[4] *History of the United States*, IV, 44.

and they called in troops from everywhere in Dixie, following General Johnston's advice that "all their available forces should be united near Richmond . . . the great army thus formed . . . to fall with its full force upon McClellan when the Federal army was expecting to besiege only the troops it had followed from Yorktown." [5] He tells us that 37,000 men came from Georgia and the Carolinas. That would make 137,000 men, it seems probable from this very conservative calculation, or in the ratio of nearly 3 to 2, at the very least estimate. During those weary, maddening weeks while he was waiting in the mud and rain for McDowell, McClellan got constant tidings of the gathering of the Southern clans.

On June the 16th General Mansfield wrote to the commander that a deserter, just arrived, had reported that Richmond was strongly fortified, that it was defended by 130,000 men, and that an Englishman, lately in from there, thought they had 150,000 men.[6] On June the 17th the Richmond *Dispatch* published a telegram from Montgomery, Alabama, containing this statement: "General Beauregard and staff are here on their way to Richmond. We hear that a large part of the Army of the Mississippi will soon follow the General." [7] On June the 25th General Porter wrote, "A contraband who came into our lines under the fire of our guns to-day, says he saw Beauregard and his troops arrive in Richmond." [8] Certainly there can be no better witness as to the size of the rebel army than one of its leaders. From General Joseph E. Johnson we learn that on May 31st, 1862, the effective strength of that army was 73,928,[9] and that to this were added 15,000 men from North Carolina, 22,000 men from South Carolina and Georgia, and Jackson's division of 16,000 men,—53,000 in all, making the grand total 126,928.[10]

Those who were so gullible as to be misled by the "Quaker

[5] *Battles and Leaders*, II, 203.
[6] *Official Record*, XI, III, 231.
[7] *Ibid.*, 240.
[8] *Ibid.*, 253.
[9] *Battles and Leaders*, II, 209.
[10] *Ibid.*, 217.

Gun" stories of Manassas and Yorktown will be interested in these details: the Confederate army contained 173 regiments and 12 battalions of infantry, 71 batteries and 12 regiments of cavalry; the Union army consisted of 150 regiments of infantry, two regiments and 1 battalion of engineers, 1 regiment of heavy or siege artillery, 58 batteries and 10 regiments of cavalry.[11] On July the 1st General Dix telegraphed to the Secretary of War, "Nearly the whole power of the insurgent states is concentrated at Richmond." [12]

This will convince any one who is open to conviction of the only point that is material,—namely, that the Union army was very considerably the weaker, even in nominal strength. But there is another factor. The Confederate force mentioned was entirely available for battle; it had no communications to protect, no trains to guard. Many thousands of McClellan's army were required to guard West Point, White House, and all the way to the Chickahominy, and to operate, care for, and defend the cattle, mules, wagons, and supplies on the Chickahominy. The number required for these purposes has been put as high as 20,000. Without settling the precise loss of fighting strength so occasioned, it is clear that these necessities very appreciably diminished the battle ranks of the Federal host.

To appraise rightly the credit due to McClellan in his military operations up to this time, we should contrast the conditions surrounding him with those under which others fought in the Old Dominion and the outcome of the struggles. Burnside at Fredericksburg had 127,000, Lee 100,000; Hooker at Chancellorsville had 132,000 men and 400 guns, Lee 55,000 men, according to Swinton.[13]

According to some authors, Grant when he started had 187,000 men,—140,000 with him, 30,000 under Butler, who joined the main army on the Rapidan, and two auxiliary forces under his command; 10,000 led by Crook; and 7,000 by Sigel. Lee's army rolls at the same time showed a force

[11] *Ibid.*, 187.
[12] *Official Record*, XI, III, 283.
[13] *Army of the Potomac*, 409-413.

present for duty of 52,626. To have been on a footing with Generals Burnside and Hooker, McClellan should have had an army twice as large as Lee's. According to Johnston, this would have meant 252,000 men. To have been on a footing with General Grant he should have had a colossal force of more than 334,000 men and all effectives. These other commanders, moreover, fought under favorable conditions of earth and weather. They had neither bogs nor dispiriting rains and floods to abate their ardor, and they enjoyed the cordial and vigorous support of the Administration; yet to every one of them came sore disaster, and to General Grant most of all. We will dwell on this at greater length at another time. McClellan was the only commander who ever met Lee on the road to Richmond with a lesser or an equal force; yet he is the only commander who emerged from the struggle with credit, threw the greater burden of loss upon his antagonist, and had as the result a proud, confident, and idolizing army, more eager and better fitted for fighting than before the grapple. Seeing the great preponderance of numbers which the Administration rightly thought necessary for prudent campaigning under even so determined and so successful a leader as General Grant against the ablest fighting force of the Confederacy, how is it to be excused for forcing or even permitting military operations to be prosecuted by General McClellan with numbers and under conditions so perilous to the success of the national cause?

CHAPTER XLV

THE MEED OF PRAISE

There is no discord in the recognition of the historians of the Civil War that McClellan's transfer of the army to the James was sagacious in its conception and masterly in its execution,—an object lesson of bold and skilful generalship.

"His change of base was a most difficult operation carried out with consummate skill." [1] Colonel Powell's opinion is as follows: "Fortunately for the country, on plans wisely considered in advance, the army entered upon the movement, which it was destined to repeat two years later with skeleton ranks and battered standards, vindicating the judgment . . . that first perceived, advocated and occupied the line which led to the triumph of the national arms." [2] General D. H. Hill, of the Confederate army, says: "With consummate skill he had crossed his vast train of 5,000 wagons and his immense parks of artillery safely over White Oak Swamp, but he was more exposed now than at any time in his flank march. [Observe that this Confederate leader does not call it a retreat.] Three columns of attack were converging upon him, and a strong corps was pressing upon his rear. Escape seemed impossible for him, but he did escape, at the same time inflicting heavy damage upon his pursuers." [3]

The proof which this day at Glendale,—or Frazier's Farm, as the Confederates called it,—affords of McClellan's military genius has entirely escaped the attention of writers generally. It comes to us with admirable grace from the brave and candid foeman just mentioned. He points out the fact that General Lee's plans for the day were faultless.[4] He speaks of

[1] *American Civil War*, 123.
[2] *Fifth Army Corps*, 126, 127.
[3] *Battles and Leaders*, II, 388.
[4] *Ibid.*, 388.

meeting him on the following day, and adds, "He bore grandly his terrible disappointment of the day before, and made no allusion to it." [5] It is now admitted that this was the most critical moment in the march to the James and that at this point the Federal army was most vulnerable. And it is evident that many authors regard it as an illustration of amazing good fortune that the army was not destroyed.

This view does gross injustice to McClellan's wise prevision and military sagacity. McClellan knew Lee well and gave him credit for splendid generalship; and made his own preparations accordingly. General Hill says, "Throughout this campaign we attacked just when and where the enemy wished us to attack." [6] This is but another way of saying that McClellan always divined what the enemy would do and was ready for it. The day at Frazier's Farm was one of the most notable examples in all history of the highest order of generalship. The Southern generals are all agreed that the Union army ought to have been destroyed. Why was it not? Because McClellan was not quite willing. We have noted Mr. Swinton's strong figure of McClellan holding the gallant Jackson paralyzed with one hand while he dealt vigorous blows at Longstreet and Hill with the other. But we need a many-handed leader to represent McClellan's activities through which five divisions of the rebel army were that day rendered impotent.[7] They heard the firing, and chafed with impatience to be with their comrades; but they were shut out from participation, and so Lee's plans went adrift. Was it by chance that the three divisions of Jackson and one of D. H. Hill were held beyond White Oak Swamp? Surely not. It was because of McClellan's shrewd foresight in planting Franklin where he could bar their advance. Huger, with another division, was on the Charles City road. Was it by McClellan's good luck that he took no part in the fight? No; it was because by McClellan's orders the road was so impeded by trees that had been felled and thrown across it that Huger

[5] *Battles and Leaders*, II, 391.
[6] *Ibid.*, 395.
[7] *Ibid.*, 388.

deemed it impracticable to force an advance, as Franklin also commanded that approach. Magruder and Holmes, with their two divisions, were upon the New Market road, on their way to occupy Malvern Hill. They arrived at 10:30 A. M.; but McClellan had divined that too, as we have seen, and Porter was ahead of them. So while McClellan with one hand pommeled Longstreet and A. P. Hill at Frazier's Farm, with another he throttled Jackson and D. H. Hill with four divisions at White Oak Swamp, with another tied up Huger with his division on the Charles City road, and with still another balked the two divisions of Magruder and Holmes at Malvern Hill. And while all these Southern war tigers gnashed their teeth in impotent rage, just beyond the reach of their claws the "forty miles of wagons" and great herds of cattle and parks of artillery moved slowly and with difficulty, but undisturbed, along the miry Quaker road to Haxall, on the James. It is interesting to read of the excuses and theories given for the failure of the fiery and aggressive Jackson to get to Frazier's Farm on the 30th. He was exhausted, he was not himself that day, and so on. He was the same brave, forceful fighter as ever, as one may see from D. H. Hill's account of the day,[8] but he could not get past Franklin; that was all.

Of the general movement the Comte de Paris writes: "Such was the bold and masterly plan conceived by McClellan in response to the movement of his opponent, which he had divined before it commenced. . . . In relinquishing the idea of covering the York River road, he deceived all the calculations of the enemy. To venture thus with an army of more than a hundred thousand men into a series of operations, in the midst of which, whether victorious or vanquished, it was destined for some time to see its communications cut by the enemy, was certainly one of the boldest resolutions which can be adopted by a general in war." [9]

Lord Wolseley, the renowned English general, pays McClellan this glowing tribute: "The retreat to the James was an exceedingly ably conducted operation, carried out under

[8] *Ibid.*, 366, 383.
[9] *Civil War in America*, II, 88, 89.

great difficulties, and, above all, in the presence of such opponents as Lee and Jackson." [10]

Let us now hear from his chief lieutenant, General Porter: "Before the battle of Gaines's Mill (already described by me in these pages) a change of base from the York to the James River had been anticipated and prepared for by General McClellan. After the battle this change became a necessity, in presence of a strong and aggressive foe, who had already turned our right, cut our connection with the York River, and was also in large force behind the intrenchments between us and Richmond. The transfer was begun the moment our position became perilous. It now involved a series of battles by day and marches by night, which brought into relief the able talents, active foresight, and tenacity of purpose of our commander, the unity of action on his part of his subordinates, and the great bravery, firmness, and confidence in their superiors on the part of the rank and file.

"These conflicts from the beginning of the Seven Days' fighting were the engagement at Oak Grove, the battles of Beaver Dam and Gaines's Mill, the engagements at Golding's and Garnett's farms, and at Allen's farm, or Peach Orchard; the battle of Savage's Station; the artillery duel at White Oak Swamp; the battle of Glendale (or Charles City cross-roads); the action of Turkey Creek, and the battle of Malvern Hill. Each was a success to our army, the engagement of Malvern Hill being the most decisive. The result of the movement was that on the 2d of July, our army was safely established at Harrison's Landing, on the James, in accordance with General McClellan's design." [11]

Among the others who have lauded the skill and fighting qualities shown by "Little Mac" in his march to the James are Generals Webb, in *The Peninsula;* Humphrey, in the *Army of the Potomac;* Sykes; McMahon, in the *Peninsular Campaign;* Averill; General Imboden, C. S. A.; Jefferson Davis; the Prince de Joinville, in the *Army of the Potomac;* Le Compte in *La Guerre des Etats Unis;* Hillard, in the *Life and*

[10] *North American Review,* CXLVIII, 174.
[11] *Battles and Leaders,* II, 406.

Campaigns of McClellan; and Palmer, in the *Second Army Corps.* Count Von Moltke was also one of the warmest admirers of McClellan's military skill.

It is agreed with practical unanimity that, in spite of the rain, the mud, the lack of naval aid, and the consequent compulsory delay which enabled the rebels to bring in large forces from other states, and in spite of the enforced straddling of the Chickahominy and the long continuance thereon, McClellan would certainly have taken Richmond, if McDowell had joined him.

"Had McDowell . . . reinforced McClellan, there is little doubt that the Federal arms would have been successful." [12] Even the Southern historian, Mr. Eggleston, admits that if McClellan and McDowell had been permitted to unite McClellan would have been able within three or four days to overcome all opposition and to capture Richmond.[13] The Confederate general Whiting told General Imboden in effect the same thing,—namely, that but for Jackson's maneuvres McClellan would have captured Richmond.[14]

The similar view of General Imboden himself, another Confederate, we have already quoted.

Upon what is this general belief based? Above all, upon the military capacity shown by McClellan in the seven days' fight, and therefore this general belief is a commendation of his capacity.

This general belief, then, having been accepted as well founded, it is a complete vindication of McClellan's judgment and the wisdom of his plans; for if at the end of June, with the aid of McDowell, he could have captured Richmond, how much more surely he could have achieved the same result in April, if McDowell had been sent *with* him and the necessary naval force had been supplied to avert delay at Yorktown; for then the rebel army was at least 53,000 smaller.

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[12] Moore, *History of the Great Rebellion,* 109.
[13] *History of the Confederate War,* I, 287.
[14] *Battles and Leaders,* II, 297.

CHAPTER XLVI

WHERE IS M'CLELLAN?

From the 27th of June until McClellan reached the James, Stanton got only occasional news of him, and in this fact we discover one of the most interesting phases of the Civil War.

McClellan had every reason to think that the Administration's fears would never sanction a voluntary consent for the army to move to the James; and he no doubt quickly concluded that the sole reason for the enforced extension of his right wing north of Richmond was to keep it between that city and Washington. It was only a new phase of the overland route mania. So feeling that a voluntary change of base would not be favored, he was inspired by the circumstances and the necessities of the situation to resort to diplomacy. He would not march nor advance to the James; he would retreat or be driven back to the James. He would secure his desire, but apparently would be forced to it.

On June the 28th, in reply to McClellan's denunciatory telegram of June the 28th to the Secretary of War, the President wrote as follows:

"WASHINGTON, June 26, 1862.

"MAJOR-GENERAL MCCLELLAN:

"Your three dispatches of yesterday in relation to the affair, ending with the statement that you completely succeeded in making your point, are very gratifying.

"The later one of 6:15 P. M., suggesting the probability of your being overwhelmed by 200,000, and talking of where the responsibility will belong, pains me very much. I give you all I can, and act on the presumption that you will do the best you can with what you have, while you continue, ungenerously I think, to assume that I could give you more if I

would. I have omitted and shall omit no opportunity to send you re-enforcements whenever I possibly can.

"A. LINCOLN.

"P. S.—General Pope thinks if you fall back it would be much better toward York River than toward the James. As Pope now has charge of the capital, please confer with him through the telegraph." [1]

We have shown that the imaginary inability to supply reinforcements was the sheerest nonsense. One hundred thousand men could, and should, have been sent to him; and the stronger McClellan's army had been made the surer it would have been that not a rebel company would have dared to leave Richmond to annoy Washington. Every man would have been needed there. This letter conveyed to McClellan the first hint of Stanton's latest maneuver: that he was soon to be supplanted by General Pope, who was then to command the united forces of Northern Virginia. Pope had been brought to Washington for that purpose, "and eventually to supersede McClellan." [2]

The President ordered McClellan to confer with Pope as to the movements of the Army of the Potomac; but fate spared him that humiliation.

This letter voiced the disinclination of the civil authorities to have the army retire beyond Richmond.

On the 27th a telegram had gone to the War Department, containing this statement, "We shall endeavor to hold our own, and if compelled to fall back shall do it in good order, upon James river, if possible." [3]

On the same day he sent a despatch to Commodore Goldsborough, in which he said, "We have met a severe repulse to-day, having been attacked by greatly superior numbers, and I am obliged to fall back between the Chickahominy and the James River." [4]

[1] *Official record*, XI, III, 259.
[2] *Battles and Leaders*, II, 427 n.
[3] *Official Record*, XI, III, 265.
[4] *Ibid.*, 267.

The President's postscript was intended to divert McClellan's mind from the James as a haven of refuge.

Having received no answer to his telegram Lincoln wired to General Dix at Fortress Monroe: "Communication with McClellan at White House cut off. Strain every nerve to open communication with him by James River or any other way you can. Report to me." He also wired to Goldsborough to render every assistance possible,—if he had only given that direction to the Navy Department in March!—and to Burnside to hurry to the James with any reinforcements he could spare.[5] On the same day Stanton also advised Burnside as follows: "We have intelligence that General McClellan has been attacked in large force and compelled to fall back toward the James River. We are not advised of his exact condition."[6] The authorities were anxious. A new view of the situation was forcing itself upon them. If through their policy of scattering instead of uniting the national forces the chief Union army of the East should be destroyed, where then would be the safety of Washington and how long would the army they had kept away from McClellan, and which if sent would have made him irresistible, delay the march of the triumphant rebels on the seat of government? On the 29th came their first solace in a dispatch from Ingalls, Assistant Quartermaster of the Army of the Potomac, to Meigs, the Quartermaster-General at Washington, revealing the instructions given at White House.

On June the 29th the following despatch was sent to Secretary Seward, in New York:

"War Department, June 29, 1862,—6 p. m.

"Hon. Wm. H. Seward,

"Astor House, New York:

"Not much more than when you left. Fulton, of Baltimore *American*, is now with us. He left White House at 11 A. M. yesterday. He conversed fully with a paymaster who was with Porter's force during the fight of Friday, and fell back

[5] *Official Record*, XI, III, 270.
[6] *Ibid.*, 271.

to nearer McClellan's quarters just a little sooner than Porter did, seeing the whole of it. Staid on the Richmond side of the Chickahominy overnight, and left for White House at 5 A. M. Saturday. He says Porter retired in perfect order under protection of guns arranged for the purpose, under orders and not from necessity, and, with all other of our forces except what was left on purpose to go to White House, was safely in pontoons over the Chickahominy before morning, and that there was heavy firing on the Richmond side, begun at 5 and ceased at 7 A. M. Saturday. On the whole, I think we have had the better of it up to that point of time. What has happened since we still know not, as we have no communication with General McClellan. A dispatch from Colonel Ingalls shows that he thinks McClellan is fighting with the enemy at Richmond to-day and will be to-morrow. We have no means of knowing upon what Colonel Ingalls founds his opinion. All confirmed about saving all property. Not a single unwounded straggler came back to the White House from the field, and the number of wounded reaching there up to 11 A. M. Saturday was not large.

"A. LINCOLN.

"To what the President has above stated I will only add one or two points that may be satisfactory for you to know.

"First. All the sick and wounded were safely removed from the White House; not a man left behind.

"Second. A dispatch from Burnside shows that he is in condition to afford efficient support and is probably doing so.

"Third. The dispatch of Colonel Ingalls impresses me with the conviction that the movement was made by General McClellan to concentrate on Richmond, and was successful to the latest point of which we have any information.

"Fourth. Mr. Fulton says that on Friday night between 12 and 1 o'clock General McClellan telegraphed Commodore Goldsborough that the result of the movement was satisfactory to him.

"Fifth. From these and the facts stated by the President

my inference is that General McClellan will probably be in Richmond within two days.

"EDWIN M. STANTON,
"Secretary of War." [7]

On the 30th several other illuminating messages were forwarded to Mr. Seward:

"WAR DEPARTMENT, June 30, 1862.
"HON. WM. H. SEWARD, New York:

"We are yet without communication with General McClellan, and this absence of news is our point of anxiety. Up to the latest point to which we are posted he effected everything in such exact accordance with his plan, contingently announced to us before the battle began, that we feel justified to hope that he has not failed since. He had a severe engagement in getting the part of his army on this side of the Chickahominy over to the other side, in which the enemy lost certainly as much as we did. We are not dissatisfied with this, only that the loss of enemies does not compensate for the loss of friends. The enemy cannot come below White House; certainly is not there now, and probably has abandoned the whole line. Dix's pickets are at New Kent Court-House.

"A. LINCOLN."

"WAR DEPARTMENT, June 30, 1862.
"HON. WM. H. SEWARD, Astor House, New York:

"General McClellan's line is established at Turkey Island, on the James River. Our gunboats are there. Nothing disastrous has happened to him since communication was broken off. The whole movement appears to be successful so far as we can judge, but it seems as if he meant to begin intrenching.

"EDWIN M. STANTON,
"Secretary of War."

[7] *Official Record*, XI, III, 274.

"WAR DEPARTMENT, June 30, 1862,—7 P. M.
"HON. WM. H. SEWARD, Astor House, New York:

"We have received nothing of consequence since my last message stating that General McClellan's communication with the gunboats was established. His depot on the James River is at Turkey Island Point. Stoneman's and Casey's forces are on the way to join him from Fort Monroe. Without losing a man, they were the last to leave White House. The enemy have not advanced beyond White House. Halleck promises to send the force asked from him, and I have sent Tucker to Corinth to arrange the transportation. We have news from Vicksburg. Farragut and Ellet's ram fleet are there, acting together. The Mississippi is clear from Memphis to Vicksburg, and we shall soon have that. Goldsborough gives a report that Stonewall Jackson was killed Friday. Pope is hard at work organizing his force. Sigel takes Fremont's corps instead of King, who preferred to keep command of his own division. You shall have all the reliable news as fast as it comes. Dix is at work to establish a new telegraph line between him and McClellan. Evefything is moving briskly and favorably. If the governors will give us promptly 100,000 men, the war will be over. Mark the hour your telegrams are sent.

"EDWIN M. STANTON,
"Secretary of War." [8]

On the 30th a dispatch was sent to General Wool also, in these words:

"WAR DEPARTMENT, Washington City,
"June 30, 1862.

"MAJOR-GENERAL WOOL:

"McClellan has moved his whole force across the Chickahominy and rests on James River, being supported by our gunboats. The position is favorable, and looks more like tak-

[8] *Ibid.*, 276, 277.

ing Richmond than any time before. I will send you some service money.

"EDWIN M. STANTON,
"Secretary of War." [9]

This was a very busy day at the army headquarters in Washington, for repeated communications passed between the President and the Secretary on one hand and General Dix on the other, in the course of which the general said, "We have no doubt that McClellan intended to abandon the White House." [10]

In the first recognition of the peril in which the Army of the Potomac stood, and, above all, of the peril to Washington which would surely follow the army's destruction, Stanton wired Halleck at Corinth on June the 28th:

"WAR DEPARTMENT, June 28th, 1862.
"MAJOR-GENERAL HALLECK, Corinth:

"The enemy have concentrated in such force at Richmond as to render it absolutely necessary, in the opinion of the President, for you immediately to detach 25,000 of your force and forward it by the nearest and quickest route, by way of Baltimore and Washington, to Richmond. (It is believed that the quickest route would be by way of Columbus, Ky., and up the Ohio River. But in detaching your force the President directs that it be done in such way as to enable you to hold your ground and not interfere with the movement against Chattanooga and East Tennessee. This condition being observed, the forces to be detached and the route they are to be sent is left to your own judgment.)

"The direction to send these forces immediately is rendered imperative by a serious reverse suffered by General McClellan before Richmond yesterday, the full extent of which is not yet known.

"You will acknowledge the receipt of this dispatch, stating the day and hour it is received, and inform me what your

[9] *Official Record*, XI, III, 277.
[10] *Ibid.*, 278.

action will be, so that we may take measures to aid in river and railroad transportation.

"EDWIN M. STANTON,
"Secretary of War." [11]

But on the 30th the President's (or the Secretary's) mind was to some extent relieved, and another despatch to Halleck contained only a request, to which the reply was predestined from the very form of the request to be a negative.

"WASHINGTON, D. C.,
"June 30, 1862.

"MAJOR-GENERAL HALLECK,
"Corinth, Miss.:

"Would be very glad of 25,000 infantry; no artillery or cavalry; but please do not send a man if it endangers any place you deem important to hold, or if it forces you to give up or weaken or delay the expectations against Chattanooga. To take and hold the railroad at or east of Cleveland, in East Tennessee, I think fully as important as the taking and holding of Richmond.

"A. LINCOLN." [12]

The method of avoiding the request is pointed out in the request itself, and Halleck avails himself of it by assenting cheerfully, but pointing out the long delay necessary to get the troops to Washington and the inevitable abandonment or curtailment of the Chattanooga expedition. Whereupon at 3 P. M. comes the swift injunction that the expedition must on no account be given up, adding: "The first reports from Richmond were more discouraging than the truth warranted. If the advantage is not on our side, it is balanced. General McClellan has moved his whole force onto the line of the James and is supported by our gunboats. But he must be largely strengthened before advancing, and hence the call on you, which I am glad you have answered so promptly. Let me know to what point on the river you will send your

[11] *Ibid.*, 271.
[12] *Ibid.*, 279.

forces, so as to provide immediately for transportation." [13]

Of course upon such a mandate the troops never came. On the 30th of June and on the 1st of July McClellan sent in urgent appeals for reinforcement.

On the 1st of July came this cordial answer from Mr. Stanton:

"WAR DEPARTMENT, Washington, D. C.,
"July 1, 1862.

"MAJOR-GENERAL McCLELLAN:

"Your telegram of last night has been received, and will be answered by the President. We have sent you 5,000 from McDowell's corps since Saturday that have reached Fort Monroe already, and I hope will be of use to you. Halleck has been ordered to send a corps of his army, 25,000 infantry, and answered that he will do so. Tucker is on the road to Corinth to arrange the transportation. I hope to have them with you within two weeks. Hold your ground and you will be in Richmond before the month is over.

"EDWIN M. STANTON,
"Secretary of War." [14]

The exhaustion of the soldiers was absolute. There was barely an atom of vitality left in them, because of the sleepless labor and fighting of that terrible week, and their leader was hardly less overcome. His tireless, sleepless work in transferring his army and his anxiety for its safety because of its condition brought him to the verge of a collapse, as his dispatches of the 30th of June and the 1st of July clearly show. Oh for a few thousand fresh men to relieve his weary men! Oh for 50,000 men with which to destroy that great horde of foes!

[13] *Official Record*, XI, III, 279, 280.
[14] *Ibid.*, 281.

CHAPTER XLVII

WAS A DASH ON RICHMOND FEASIBLE?

That the Army of the Potomac should have been encamped for over five weeks within a few miles of Richmond in May and June, 1862, and should never have assaulted it creates a sense of mortification which, with many who have not sufficiently ascertained and considered the facts, easily merges into dissatisfaction and adverse criticism. This is especially true of those who fancy that the fighters of Lee, instead of being 30,000 more than those of McClellan, were 30,000 less.

Under favorable conditions, so great was his reliance upon his artillery in equalizing forces that he would have struck very quickly after the army was assembled before Richmond. But as Napoleon waited five hours at Waterloo for the ground to harden, so McClellan waited five weeks in vain on the Chickahominy for the earth to get hard enough for him to maneuver his guns. No complaint is made that he did not attack at this time, when the whole Confederate army stood between him and the prize. But when his right wing was attacked at Beaver Dam and Gaines's Mill, it is thought by some,—upon the supposition that the great mass of the rebel troops were beyond the Chickahominy from Richmond and that "only a thin veil of troops" intervened between the Federal left wing and the Capital City of the enemy,—that advantage should then have been taken of such an opportunity and that while Porter sturdily held the attacking forces at bay the other corps of the Union army should have rushed into Richmond. Color is given to this view by the outright statement of General D. H. Hill that this enterprise could easily have been carried out. But there is very weighty conflicting evidence. General Johnston, adverting to Mr. Davis's claim

that a similar project was on foot in the latter part of May, 1862, says of it: "It is certain that General Lee could have had no such hopes from this plan, nor have been a party to it; for it would not only have sent our army where there was no enemy, but left open the way to Richmond. For the Meadow Bridge is two and a half miles from Mechanicsville, and that place about six miles above the Federal right. . . . So after two-thirds of our troops had crossed the Chickahominy, the Federal army could have marched straight to Richmond opposed by not more than one-fifth of its number in Magruder's and D. H. Hill's divisions. This plan is probably the wildest on record." [1] Certainly a plan which would have left the way open to Richmond would have seemed as wild a few weeks later as it did then.

Moreover, the circumstantial evidence in the case is heavily against "the thin veil." Heintzelman, Sumner, Franklin, and Keyes were so sure that the enemy confronted them in strong force that they were loath to part with any troops to aid Porter. Again, taking General D. H. Hill's statement that there were 50,000 Confederates engaged in the attack on the Union right wing, that would leave more than 76,000, according to General J. E. Johnston, between the Federals and Richmond; and upon every estimate it is clear that at least half of the rebel host was there.

In such a problem prudence demands that the most unfavorable estimate should be assumed to be correct.

On the score of numbers solely, then, the circumstances did not approve or justify an assault, but many have condemned the wisdom of such an attempt even upon the hypothesis that Keyes, Sumner, Heintzelman, and Franklin could have readily overpowered the force confronting them. Let us first, however, hear from McClellan himself, speaking of June the 27th, the date of the fierce struggle at Gaines's Mill:

"Had the First corps effected its promised junction, we might have turned the head-waters of the Chickahominy and attacked Richmond from the north and northwest, while we

[1] *Battles and Leaders*, II, 210.

preserved our line of supply from West Point; but with the force actually at my disposal such an attempt would simply have exposed the Army of the Potomac to destruction in detail, and the total loss of its communications. It is hardly necessary to say that the country in which we operated could supply nothing for the wants of the army, and that were our communications with the depots cut and held by the enemy nothing but starvation awaited us." [2] "I concurred fully with the President in his injunction, contained in his telegram of the 24th, that it was necessary, with my limited force, to move cautiously and safely."

"As the entrenchments around Richmond were strong and heavily garrisoned, it would have been an act of madness and folly had I temporarily abandoned my communications and thrown the entire army across the stream, trusting to the chances of carrying the place by assault before the troops had exhausted the supplies carried with them." [3]

The Comte de Paris stoutly rejects the wisdom of the enterprise, upon the ground that, assuming its immediate success, it offered "no tangible and lasting advantage. McClellan would have been besieged and lost his base on the James." [4] There is no suggestion of favorable opportunity to be found in the writings of the Southern historians, Eggleston, Pollard, or Davis. Franklin warmly defends McClellan's prudence in not venturing upon the assault. Yet Franklin did not know the obstacles to success as well as we do; and he supposed when he wrote that the intervening force was not as formidable as it had seemed to be, and as it really was.

"Prudence would not allow the venture," argues Franklin.[5] General Averill too condemns it.[6] Mr. Rhodes declares against the wisdom of such an attack.[7] "Nothing would have pleased Lee and Davis more." [8]

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[2] McClellan, *Own Story*, 362, 363.
[3] *Ibid.*, 364.
[4] *Civil War in America*, II, 105.
[5] *Ibid.*, 382.
[6] *Ibid.*, 431.
[7] *History of the United States*, IV, 33.
[8] *Ibid.*

The official report of Allan Pinkerton, chief of the secret service bureau of the government, showed 125,000 men at this time between the Union army and Richmond.[9] Prudence demanded that McClellan should assume this report to be true, even though it seemed to him exaggerated. Mr. Moore asserts that "with the right wing unprotected, and powerful and well defended fortifications before them, McClellan and his corps commanders knew that an assault upon Richmond could not fail to be disastrous." [10] Mr. Tenney considers the question fully and presents the arguments against such an assault very cogently. "McClellan was in no condition to risk anything. He had fought the enemy in equal or superior numbers [at Fair Oaks] and they had retired in confusion. If the corps of McDowell were on hand now, he might have taken Richmond, but without it the commanding general was not strong enough to risk an immediate assault." [11] He further argues that prudence forbade the attempt, and that even if it had been successful, disaster would have swiftly followed the apparent advantage. As to an attack after Fair Oaks, McClellan, having shown the reoccupation of the ground from which Keyes's troops were first driven, adds:

"Our troops pushed forward as far as the lines held by them on the 31st before the attack. On the battlefield there were found many of our own and the Confederate wounded, arms, caissons, wagons, subsistence stores, and forage, abandoned by the enemy in his rout. The state of the roads and impossibility of manœuvring artillery prevented further pursuit. On the next morning a reconnoissance was sent forward, which pressed back the pickets of the enemy to within five miles of Richmond; but again the impossibility of forcing even a few batteries forward precluded our holding permanently this position. The lines held previous to the battle were therefore resumed. . . .

"The only available means, therefore, of uniting our forces at Fair Oaks for an advance on Richmond soon after the

[9] Webb, *The Peninsula*, 188.
[10] *History of the Great Rebellion*, 168.
[11] *Military and Naval History of the Rebellion*, 244.

battle was to march the troops from Mechanicsville and other points on the left bank of the Chickahominy, down to Bottom's bridge, and thence over the Williamsburg road to the position near Fair Oaks, a distance of about twenty-three miles. In the condition of the roads at that time this march could not have been made with artillery in less than two days, by which time the enemy would have been secure within his entrenchments around Richmond. In short, the idea of uniting the two wings of the army in time to make a vigorous pursuit of the enemy, with the prospect of overtaking him before he reached Richmond, only five miles distant from the field of battle, is simply absurd, and was, I presume, never for a moment seriously entertained by any one connected with the Army of the Potomac. An advance involving the separation of the two wings by the impassable Chickahominy would have exposed each to defeat in detail. Therefore I held the position already gained, and completed our crossings as rapidly as possible." [12]

As to the feasibility of an assault, General Porter is an adverse witness: "It was apparent to both generals that Richmond could only be taken in one of two ways: by regular approaches, or by assault. An assault would require superior forces, supported by ample reserves. It was equally apparent that an attack could readily be made from Richmond, because that city's well armed and manned intrenchments would permit its defense by a small number of men, while large forces could be concentrated and detached for offensive operations." [13]

Colonel Powell's argument seems conclusive: "Richmond could only be captured by regular approaches or by direct assault. Regular approaches required time and a well secured base of supplies. An assault required superior forces and ample reserves. The Army of the Potomac, depleted by casualty and sickness, with reinforcements withheld and promises unfulfilled, was lacking in the essentials for either

[12] McClellan, *Own Story*, 384, 385.
[13] *Battles and Leaders*, II, 324.

course." [14] "Under the circumstances, as no aid could be expected and the right wing was in danger of being crushed, to have ordered to the assault of Richmond troops commanded by those who were apprehensive of their ability to defend their own intrenchments was impossible." [15]

It is obvious from all these capable witnesses, and from the facts made known to us by them, that it would have been imprudent and even foolhardy, considering everything, to have essayed an attack on Richmond at that time. If the rains had stopped and the ground become fit to give him the full use of his artillery, the case would have been far different.

[14] Fifth Army Corps, 74.
[15] *Ibid.*, 125.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE FATAL LETTER

An ill-considered and indiscreet expression of opinion may sometimes ruin a career which would otherwise reach the highest eminence.

It is claimed that all the ambitions of Daniel Webster were blasted by a single speech made on the ninth of March, 1850; that the result of that single effort, in the tense state of public feeling, was to shut out all the glorious prospect which lay before him.

The impression is widespread that it was without any previous intimation of his intention that General McClellan, on the occasion of the President's visit to his army on July 8th, 1862, handed him the letter which I shall now discuss. The General says: "He read it in my presence, but made no comments upon it, merely saying, when he had finished it, that he was obliged to me for it or words to that effect. I do not think that he alluded further to it during his visit or at any time after that."[1] Many praise the indulgence and forbearance of Mr. Lincoln in submitting, as they view it, to an act of inexcusable intermeddling without a word of reproof. But the absence of rebuke does not seem so remarkable when we know that the letter was presented to the President upon his invitation.

On the 20th of June, in a despatch to the President, General McClellan inserted this suggestion: "I would be glad to have permission to lay before your Excellency, by letter or telegraph, my views as to the present state of military affairs throughout the whole country."[2] On the evening of the 21st of June the President responded: "If it would not divert

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 487.
[2] *Official Record*, XI, 1, 48.

too much of your time and attention from the army under your immediate command, I would be glad to have your views as to the present state of military affairs throughout the whole country, as you say you would be glad to give them." [3]

Until the army was installed in safety on the James there was no time to give to the contemplated purpose, but at his first leisure McClellan prepared the famous document and delivered it to Mr. Lincoln.

Mr. Pollard, the author of *The Lost Cause,* believes that McClellan's letter "must forever remain a monument of honor to his name." [4] "The text of the letter deserves to be carefully studied as the exposition of the declarations of a party in the North that was for limiting the objects of war to its original declaration and conducting it on humane and honorable principles."

The text of the letter follows:

"HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
"CAMP NEAR HARRISON'S LANDING, VA.,
"July 7, 1862.

"MR. PRESIDENT:

"You have been fully informed that the rebel army is in the front, with the purpose of overwhelming us by attacking our positions or reducing us by blocking our river communications. I cannot but regard our condition as critical, and I earnestly desire, in view of possible contingencies, to lay before your Excellency, for your private consideration, my general views concerning the existing state of the rebellion, although they do not strictly relate to the situation of this army or strictly come within the scope of my official duties. These views amount to convictions, and are deeply impressed upon my mind and heart. Our course must never be abandoned; it is the cause of free institutions and self-government. The constitution and the union must be preserved, whatever may be the cost in time, treasure, and blood. If

[3] *Official Record,* XI, 1, 48.
[4] 298.

secession is successful, other dissolutions are clearly to be seen in the future. Let neither military disaster, political faction, nor foreign war shake your settled purpose to enforce the equal operation of the laws of the United States upon the people of every state.

"The time has come when the government must determine upon a civil and military policy covering the whole ground of our national trouble.

"The responsibility of determining, declaring, and supporting such civil and military policy, and of directing the whole course of national affairs in regard to the rebellion, must now be assumed and exercised by you, or our cause will be lost. The constitution gives you power sufficient even for the present terrible exigency.

"This rebellion has assumed the character of war; as such it should be regarded, and it should be conducted upon the highest principles known to Christian civilization. It should not be a war looking to the subjugation of the people of any state in any event. It should not be at all a war upon population, but against armed forces and political organizations. Neither confiscation of property, political execution of persons, territorial organization of states, or forcible abolition of slavery should be contemplated for a moment. In prosecuting the war all private property and unarmed persons should be strictly protected, subject only to the necessity of military operations. All private property taken for military use should be paid or receipted for; pillage and waste should be treated as high crimes; all unnecessary trespass sternly prohibited, and offensive demeanor by the military towards citizens promptly rebuked. Military arrests should not be tolerated, except in places where active hostilities exist, and oaths not required by enactments constitutionally made should be neither demanded nor received. Military government should be confined to the preservation of public order and the protection of political rights. Military power should not be allowed to interfere with the relations of servitude, either by supporting or impairing the authority of the master, except for repressing disorder, as in other cases. Slaves con-

traband under the act of Congress, seeking military protection, should receive it. The right of the government to appropriate permanently to its own service claims to slave labor should be asserted, and the right of the owner to compensation therefor should be recognized.

"This principle might be extended, upon grounds of military necessity and security, to all the slaves within a particular state, thus working manumission in such state; and in Missouri, perhaps in Western Virginia also, and possibly even in Maryland, the expediency of such a measure is only a question of time.

"A system of policy thus constitutional and conservative, and pervaded by the influences of Christianity and freedom, would receive the support of almost all truly loyal men, would deeply impress the rebel masses and all foreign nations, and it might be humbly hoped that it would commend itself to the favor of the Almighty.

"Unless the principles governing the future conduct of our struggle shall be made known and approved, the effort to obtain requisite forces will be almost hopeless. A declaration of radical views, especially upon slavery, will rapidly disintegrate our present armies. The policy of the government must be supported by concentrations of military power. The national forces should not be dispersed in expeditions, posts of occupation, and numerous armies, but should be mainly collected into masses and brought to bear upon the armies of the Confederate States. Those armies thoroughly defeated, the political structure which they support would soon cease to exist.

"In carrying out any system of policy which you may form, you will require a commander-in-chief of the army, one who possesses your confidence, understands your views, and who is competent to execute your orders by directing the military forces of the nation to the accomplishment of the objects by you proposed. I do not ask that place for myself. I am willing to serve you in such position as you may assign me, and I will do so as faithfully as ever subordinate served superior.

"I may be on the brink of eternity; and as I hope forgiveness from my Maker, I have written this letter with sincerity towards you and from love for my country.

"Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

"GEO. B. McCLELLAN,

"Maj.-Gen. Commanding." [5]

It seems to me that any one must be saturated with partisan prejudice who can read that letter without admiration for its author. It reveals a very high degree of literary capacity. It is distinguished because of its force of expression, its accuracy of diction, and its precision of statement, while the views set forth are wise and commendable.

His protest against the confiscation of property and the territorial organization of states seems prophetic of the dark days of reconstruction.

His views of waging war are those of a soldier,—of a soldier who is at the same time a gentleman, not a savage. The military policy urged is the very opposite of the puerile one which the government had been following. "The policy of the government must be supported by concentrations of military power. The National forces should not be dispersed in expeditions, posts of occupation, and numerous armies, but should mainly be collected into masses, and brought to bear upon the armies of the Confederate States."

He asserts the necessity of a competent general-in-chief.

The soundness and the sagacity of all these views but one received a little later a practical approval by adoption on the part of the government, and that one no doubt would have been likewise adopted, if no partisan interest had barred the way.

But by far the most important feature of this letter is the suggestion of the manumission of slaves in a state, on the ground of military necessity. Here, it may well be claimed, was the seed which, implanted in the minds of Mr. Stanton and Mr. Lincoln, blossomed into general emancipation on the ground of military necessity; for until about this time Mr. Lincoln was firmly of the opinion that emancipa-

[5] *Official Record*, XI, III, 73.

tion was unconstitutional, and shortly after this time,—in September, 1862,—he stoutly defended his power on the ground of military necessity. These coincidences are too wonderful to have been accidental.

Mr. Flower insists that Stanton was the true father of emancipation; and it is quite possible that, in studying this letter to bring trouble upon its author, his astute mind saw that a grand scheme could be built upon this doctrine of military necessity, which would result in his continuance in power. The liberation and enfranchisement of the blacks was no grand humanitarian project for the liberation of a race, but merely a sage device to retain the authority for which his soul hungered, although, as an incident, it involved the liberation of a race from slavery, which was good, and also its immediate enfranchisement without preparation or capacity for it, which was bad. As another incident, it involved the disfranchisement and immeasurable humiliation and degradation of a spirited and brilliant race, which disfranchisement was cruel and infamous, and will soon be vehemently condemned by every American.

The suggestion that the conduct of the war needed a general-in-chief gave Stanton a pretext to spread the report through the North that Halleck had been appointed at McClellan's request; and Mrs. McClellan evidently wrote to ask if advice so foolish had been actually given, for McClellan writes to his wife in his letter of July 27, 1862: "You ask me whether I advised the President to appoint Halleck? The letter of which I sent you a copy [the letter of July the 7th] is all that ever passed on the subject, either directly or indirectly; not another word more than is there was ever written. We never conversed on the subject; I was never informed of his views or intentions, and even now have not been officially informed of the appointment. I only know it through the newspapers. In all these things the President and those around him have acted so as to make the matter as offensive as possible." [6] This indicates Stanton's pretense and how baseless it was.

[6] McClellan, *Own Story*, 456.

Partisan enemies for a long time claimed that the Harrison Bar letter was written for political purposes, but more recent writers reject this idea as unworthy of consideration. The letter was not made public by McClellan until his report was issued in August, 1863,—more than a year later. Whatever knowledge was had of it at the time came through the President. Mr. Flower in his life of Stanton makes no mention of it.

The letter, it will be seen, had no influence upon McClellan's fortunes. What befell him was already ordained—by Mr. Stanton.

CHAPTER XLIX

ON THE JAMES—THE PRIZE AT HAND

The exhaustion of the army was indeed complete. Every atom of energy had been wrung out of it by the labor and fighting of the preceding week.

Installed in its quarters at Harrison's Landing, it was almost crazy for rest and in no fit condition even to intrench. And their commander was as tired as the soldiers were; and in addition, seeing the condition of his men, he was full of anxiety for their safety, as he correctly judged that the enemy, because of their greater numbers, could bring fresh troops upon him. A few passages from his letters to his wife about this time will be of interest: "June 30, 7 P. M., Turkey Bridge. Well, but worn out; no sleep for many days. We have been fighting for many days, and are still at it. . . . We have fought every day for five days. . . ."

"July 1, Haxall's Plantation. . . . The whole army is here; worn out and war-worn, after a week of daily battles. I have still very great confidence in them, and they in me. The dear fellows cheer me as of old as they march to certain death, and I feel prouder of them than ever."

"July 2, . . . Berkeley, James River. . . . I have only energy enough left to scrawl you a few lines to say that I have the whole army here, with all its material and guns. We are all worn out and haggard. . . . My men need repose, and I hope will be allowed to enjoy it to-morrow. Your poor uncle was killed at Gaines's Mill on Friday last. We are well but very tired. . . . ."[1]

His despatches on the 30th of June and on the 1st of July reflected his anxiety. What he felt the Confederates

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 442.

could do he naturally expected they would do; but in his physical and mental weariness, which for the moment amounted almost to a collapse, he did not put a proper valuation on his own skill, nor did he realize how thoroughly the fearful slaughter at Malvern Hill had dampened the spirit of the bravest among the Confederates. During all the time the Union army remained on the James in 1862 no general attack upon it was ever made. General Lee was not seeking another Malvern Hill. One was more than enough. There were some desultory annoyances from detachments for a few days, some attempts to harass the gunboats, and then the war on the James was ended for the space of two years.

Rest, freedom from attack, the realization that though they had received hard blows they had given still harder ones and that the enemy, despite superior strength, wanted no more of them, quickly filled the soldiers with confidence in their leader and themselves and with eagerness to renew the combat as soon as favorable numbers would lend hope to the enterprise.

On July the 9th the General wrote to his wife referring to the President's visit on July the 8th, of which we will speak later: "He found the army anything but demoralized or dispirited; in excellent spirits." [2] On July the 10th he wrote: "If properly supported, I will yet take Richmond. Am not in the least discouraged," and again on July the 13th: "I flatter myself that the army is a greater thorn in the side of the rebellion than ever, and I most certainly (with God's blessing) intend to take Richmond with it. I trust that we have passed through our darkest time and that God will smile upon us and give us victory." [3]

In a letter of July 5th to Adjutant-General Lorenzo Thomas,—which meant in effect to Mr. Stanton,—General McClellan says: "My men are in excellent spirits. A short time will fully rest them. . . . You may rest assured,

[2] McClellan, *Own Story*, 446.
[3] *Ibid.*, 448.

General, that Richmond shall yet be taken if I am properly supported." [4]

On July the 18th Colonel Ingalls, the local quartermaster, wrote to General Meigs in Washington: "The army is a magnificent one to-day. All we require now is more men and generals full of health and desire to go into Richmond. We must and soon can go forward. The army must not go back one foot. The commanding general is in excellent health and full of confidence, and is the 'pride and boast' of his men." [5] On July the 6th General Dix shrewdly wrote to the Secretary of War: "The army occupies a strong position and I think you may dismiss all apprehension in regard to its safety. The forbearance of the enemy for five days is the best evidence that they have suffered severely and are in no condition to attack." [6]

While the army was cut off from communication with Washington, the greatest anxiety was felt as to its safety. The urgent calls of McClellan, as well as the direct reports of the secret service bureau, informed the Government of the great force gathered at Richmond; and the realization now came to those in power that if this army whose fate was hidden from them should be destroyed, the corps of McDowell, which they had kept from him, would be no protection. The victorious Virginians would quickly overwhelm it and rush upon the capital, and when they found that the army was safe their relief was so great that they could not conceal it. They lauded McClellan and his men; they promised troops galore. On June the 30th Stanton wired to Seward at New York, "If the governors will give us promptly 100,000 men, the war will be over." [7] On the same day he despatched to General Wool, "The position is favorable and looks more like taking Richmond than ever." [8]

On July the 1st McClellan despatched this communication to the War Department:

[4] *Official Record*, XI, III, 298, 299.
[5] *Ibid.*, 326, 327.
[6] *Ibid.*, 304.
[7] *Ibid.*, 277.
[8] *Ibid.*

"HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
"HAXALL'S PLANTATION, July 1, 1862.

"BRIG.-GEN. LORENZO THOMAS,
"Adjutant-General U. S. Army.

"GENERAL: My whole army is here, with all its guns and material. The battle of yesterday was very severe, but the enemy was repulsed and severely punished. After dark the troops retired to this position. My men are completely exhausted, and I dread the result if we are attacked to-day by fresh troops. If possible, I shall retire to-night to Harrison's Bar, where the gunboats can render more aid in covering our position. Permit me to urge that not an hour should be lost in sending me fresh troops. More gunboats are much needed.

"I hope that the enemy was so severely handled yesterday as to render him careful in his movements to-day. I now pray for time. My men have proved themselves equals of any troops in the world, but they are worn-out. Our losses have been very great. I doubt whether more severe battles have ever been fought. We have failed to win only because overpowered by superior numbers.

"Very truly yours,
"GEO. B. MCCLELLAN,
"Major-General Commanding." [9]

The attitude of the President at this time and the fact that he appreciated the safety of the army are shown in the following correspondence:

"WASHINGTON, July 1, 1862, 3:30 P. M.

"It is impossible to re-enforce you for your present emergency. If we had a million of men, we could not get them to you in time. We have not the men to send. If you are not strong enough to face the enemy you must find a place of security, and wait, rest, and repair. Maintain your ground if you can, but save the army at all events, even if you fall back to Fort Monroe. We still have strength enough in the country and will bring it out.

"A. LINCOLN."

[9] *Official Record*, XI, III, 282.

On the 2d of July he says: "If you think you are not strong enough to take Richmond just now, I do not ask you to. Try just now to save the army, material, and personnel, and I will strengthen it for the offensive again as fast as I can. The governors of eighteen States offer me a new levy of 300,000, which I accept." [10]

"WASHINGTON, July 3, 1862, 3 P. M.

"Yours of 5:30 yesterday is just received. I am satisfied that yourself, officers, and men have done the best you could. All accounts say better fighting was never done. Ten thousand thanks for it.

"A. LINCOLN.[11]

"MAJ.-GEN. GEORGE B. McCLELLAN."

"WASHINGTON, July 5, 1862, 9 A. M.

"A thousand thanks for the relief your two dispatches, of 12 and 1 P. M. yesterday, gave me. Be assured the heroism and skill of yourself and officers and men is, and forever will be, appreciated.

"If you can hold your present position, we shall hive the enemy yet.

"A. LINCOLN.[12]

"MAJ.-GEN. GEORGE B. McCLELLAN,

"Commanding Army of the Potomac."

The relief and the delight of the Secretary of War that the army was secure were so great that he waxed affectionate.

"WAR DEPARTMENT,

"WASHINGTON, D. C., July 5, 1862.

"MAJ.-GEN. GEORGE B. McCLELLAN:

"I have nominated for promotion General Sumner as brevet major-general of the regular service and major-general of volunteers; Generals Heintzelman, Keyes, and Porter

[10] *Official Record*, XI, 1, 71.
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] *Ibid.*, 72.

as brevet brigadiers in the regular service and major-generals of volunteers. The gallantry of every officer and man in your noble army shall be suitably acknowledged.

"General Marcy is here. He will take you cheering news. Be assured that you shall have the support of this Department and the Government as cordially and faithfully as was ever rendered by man to man, and if we should ever live to see each other face to face you will be satisfied that you have never had from me anything but the most confiding integrity.

"EDWIN M. STANTON,
"Secretary of War." [13]

"WAR DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON CITY, D. C.,
"July 5, 1862.

"DEAR GENERAL: I have had a talk with Gen. Marcy, and meant to have written you by him, but am called to the country, where Mrs. Stanton is with her children, to see one of them die.

"I can therefore only say, my dear general, in this brief moment, that there is no cause in my heart or conduct for the cloud that wicked men have raised between us for their own base and selfish purpose. No man had ever truer friend than I have been to you and shall continue to be.

"You are seldom absent from my thoughts, and I am ready to make any sacrifice to aid you. Time allows me to say no more than that I pray Almighty God to deliver you and your army from all peril and lead you on to victory.

"Yours truly,
"EDWIN M. STANTON." [14]

Here was a great opportunity, to be availed of diplomatically. McClellan should have met the Secretary's professions of friendship with assurances of the deepest satisfaction, and of the most glowing confidence that the end of the war was close at hand; he should have pointed out that all that was needed to capture Richmond and to crush the rebel-

[13] *Official Record*, XI, III, 298.
[14] McClellan, *Own Story*, 476.

lion before the month was over was his active cooperation and support in reinforcing the army, and that this was the natural agency through which the Lord would operate "to lead the army on to victory."

But General McClellan was too magnanimous, as well as too innocent of politics, to dream of such a reply.

This was his response:[15]

"HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
"CAMP NEAR HARRISON'S LANDING, VA., July 8, 1862.

"Dear Sir: Your letter of the 5th instant by Gen. Marcy has made a deep impression on my mind. Let me, in the first place, express my sympathy with you in the sickness of your child, which I trust may not prove fatal.

"I shall be better understood by you, and our friendly relations will become more fixed, if I am permitted to recur briefly to the past.

"When you were appointed Secretary of War I considered you my intimate friend and confidential adviser. Of all men in the nation you were my choice for that position.

"It was the unquestionable prerogative of the President to determine the military policy of the administration and to select the commanders who should carry out the measures of the government. To any action of this nature I could, of course, take no personal exception.

"But from the time you took office your official conduct towards me as commander-in-chief of the army of the United States, and afterwards as commander of the Army of the Potomac, was marked by repeated acts done in such manner as to be deeply offensive to my feelings and calculated to affect me injuriously in public estimation.

"After commencing the present campaign your concurrence in the withholding of a large portion of my force, so essential to the success of my plans, led me to believe that your mind was warped by a bitter personal prejudice against me.

"Your letter compels me to believe that I have been mis-

[15] McClellan, *Own Story*, 477.

taken in regard to your real feelings and opinions, and that your conduct, so unaccountable to my own fallible judgment, must have proceeded from views and motives which I did not understand. I have made this frank statement because I thought that it would best accord with the spirit of your communication.

"It is with a feeling of great relief that I now say to you that I shall at once resume on my part the same cordial confidence which once characterized our intercourse.

"You have more than once told me that together we could save this country. It is yet not too late to do so.

"To accomplish this there must be between us the most entire harmony of thought and action, and such I offer you.

"The crisis through which we are passing is a terrible one.

"I have briefly given in a confidential letter to the President my views (please ask to see it) as to the policy which ought to govern this contest on our part.

"You and I during last summer so often talked over the whole subject that I have only expressed the opinions then agreed upon between us.

"The nation will support no other policy. None other will call forth its energies in time to save our cause. For none other will our armies continue to fight.

"I have been perfectly frank with you. Let no cloud hereafter arise between us.

"Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

"GEORGE B. McCLELLAN,
"Maj.-Gen. Commanding.

"HON. E. M. STANTON,
"Secretary of War."

In the first glow of gratitude for the safety of the army and the consequent safety of Washington the Administration undoubtedly intended to reinforce McClellan. While the first series of despatches to Halleck gave him a loophole for refusal, the one that follows was unequivocal:

"WAR DEPARTMENT,
"July 4, 1862.

"MAJOR-GENERAL HALLECK, Corinth, Miss.:

"You do not know how much you would oblige us if, without abandoning any of your position or plans, you could promptly send us even 10,000 infantry. Can you not? Some part of the Corinth army is certainly fighting McClellan in front of Richmond. Prisoners are in our hands from the late Corinth army.

"A. LINCOLN."

The despatch just given, it will be noted, indicates the extent of the gathering of forces to oppose McClellan.

On the same day came the following telegram from General Marcy:

"WAR DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, D. C.
"July 4, 1862.

"GENERAL McCLELLAN,
"Commanding Army of the Potomac:

"I have seen the President and Secretary of War. Ten thousand men from Hunter, 10,000 from Burnside, and 11,000 from here have been ordered to re-enforce you as soon as possible. Halleck has been urged by the President to send you at once 10,000 men from Corinth.

"The President and Secretary speak very kindly of you and find no fault.

"I will remain here until I hear from you.

"R. B. MARCY,
"Chief of Staff." [16]

Orders were also sent to General Burnside at Roanoke Island and to General Hunter at Hilton Head to hasten to McClellan with all the troops they could bring.[17]

Delighted with the spirit of his men, their trust in and affection for himself, and their eagerness to meet the enemy

[16] McClellan, *Own Story*, 294.
[17] *Ibid.*, 290.

on equal terms, and confident through the promises and so far through the acts of the government that the army would be strongly reinforced and that a triumphant close of the campaign was near, on the 4th of July the commander issued this proclamation:

"HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
"CAMP NEAR HARRISON'S LANDING, VA.,
"July 4, 1862.

"SOLDIERS OF THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC:

"Your achievements of the last ten days have illustrated the valor and endurance of the American soldier. Attacked by vastly superior forces, and without hope of re-enforcements, you have succeeded in changing your base of operations by a flank movement, always regarded as the most hazardous of military expedients. You have saved all your material, all your trains, and all your guns, except a few lost in battle, taking in return guns and colors from the enemy. Upon your march you have been assailed day after day with desperate fury by men of the same race and nation skillfully massed and led; and under every disadvantage of numbers, and necessarily of position also, you have in every conflict beaten back your foes with enormous slaughter.

"Your conduct ranks you among the celebrated armies of history. No one will now question that each of you may always say with pride, 'I belonged to the Army of the Potomac!'

"You have reached this new base complete in organization and unimpaired in spirit. The enemy may at any moment attack you. We are prepared to receive them. I have personally established your lines. Let them come, and we will convert their repulse into a final defeat. Your government is strengthening you with the resources of a great people.

"On this our nation's birthday we declare to our foes, who are rebels against the best interests of mankind, that this army shall enter the capital of their so-called Confederacy; that our national constitution shall prevail, and that the

union, which can alone insure internal peace and external security to each state, must and shall be preserved, cost what it may in time, treasure, and blood.

"GEO. B. MCCLELLAN,
"Major-General Commanding." [18]

[18] McClellan, *Own Story*, 299.

CHAPTER L

THE TRUE BASE OF OPERATIONS—FALSE HOPES OF AID

That the south bank of the James was the true base of operations against Richmond is no longer a subject of debate. It is also admitted that McClellan arrived at this conclusion very early in his study of the situation and clung to it tenaciously forever afterward. His antagonist General Johnston recognized the fact, as we have seen. General Grant too preferred this plan of advance; but finding that the opposition to it was ineradicable, he concluded doubtless that the full and hearty support of the Government would more than offset all the objections to the overland route by supplying an army which, as he thought, would crush Lee's force by the very weight of numbers.

It seems as evident to a civilian as to a military man that Richmond, in order to get supplies for its normal population and the protecting army, could not draw from the North. It must look to the South and West; and therefore its danger was from an army so located to the south of Richmond as to be impregnable, and so close as to be able quickly to intervene between the city and its source of sustenance and to spring upon Richmond at any instant, if its garrison was depleted in order to threaten the Federal capital or to make an advance toward the north for any reason. The James, a broad, navigable river, at this time in possession of the Union war vessels, supplied such a base for operations at Harrison's Bar; and as soon as the army was safely installed there, it was more to be dreaded and was in fact more dreaded by the Confederates than ever before. That which was the natural and only rational course to take they expected would be immediately taken; and as the actions of Federal authorities were well known to them, for "everything leaked out," as Lord Wolseley assures us, their alarm increased when they learned

that measures to reinforce the army were promptly being taken.

At that lucid moment, grateful for the preservation of the army, the Administration had no other thought than to enlarge the army with energetic promptness, that it might swiftly resume aggressive operations. In the clearer vision of that too brief period of sanity, it was recognized that to strengthen McClellan was to protect Washington. Five thousand men were sent at once. Burnside arrived a little later at Fortress Monroe and there halted, awaiting orders. There too came Hunter, and between them about 20,000 men would have been added to McClellan's army. But the simplest and surest step open to them was not seen or, if seen, was rejected from lack of courage. It was this: as soon as the safety and location of McClellan's army was ascertained the now united army under General Pope should have been rushed to him in transports from Fredericksburg. But this action was not even the subject of discussion.

Pope did not desire it, for it would have lessened his authority. The Government desired it still less, for it would have opened the way to Washington. This implies that Pope's army barred the way. There is a mystifying jugglery as to figures that relate to the army during the war. In a letter to General McClellan, dated July 4, 1862, General Pope states that his whole army, which was the aggregation of several which a few days before had numbered more than 74,000 men, amounted to only 43,000 men. In this letter General Pope says, "If my command be embarked and sent to you by James River, the enemy would be in Washington before it had half accomplished the journey."[1] Of itself, Pope's force afforded no obstacle to an advance of Lee's overwhelmingly superior army upon the national capital. Added to McClellan's numbers, the united army of the Potomac would have put Richmond in such peril as to have brought to it and kept in its vicinity every available soldier of the Confederacy. This was not a speculative question merely. The demonstration was being given day after day at that very time in the

[1] *Official Record*, XI, III, 295.

quietude of the great Southern army of Virginia, as all the days of July and half of the days of August sped away without movement or action, and even the tireless Jackson reclined upon his oars. It was a superb illustration of overweening conceit to assume that this peaceful condition was due to the interposition of General Pope and his army. We have the most irresistible proof to the contrary. The sole question, the paralyzing question, was: What is McClellan going to do next?

The matter seemed to be settled. The arrival of the first instalment of fresh troops, the knowledge that Burnside and Hunter were coming, and that by enlistment or otherwise it was intended at last to give his army adequate numbers left no room for doubt that the Administration had at last determined to give McClellan the cordial support which had been so long withheld.

On July the 7th General Burnside arrived at Fortress Monroe from New Berne with 8,000 men, and reported his presence to Mr. Stanton. On the same day the Secretary directed General Dix, under whose command Burnside then was, that "no cavalry or other force should move from Fort Monroe until the President arrives." [2] On July the 8th Mr. Lincoln visited the army. The detention of Burnside and the visit of the President evidently came from the same inspiration. But McClellan saw nothing sinister in the President's call, although he chafed under the delay. He certainly had strong reasons for feeling assured that the Government intended to assist him, as far as its view of "due regard to all other points" would permit.

But the surrounding circumstances dispel all doubt that, despite appearances and assertions to the contrary, Stanton about this very time began to intrigue more actively than ever for the overthrow of McClellan. For a few days after he had received the earnest and fervent professions of the letters of July 5th, McClellan must have felt elated at the prospect presented to him; but as the days passed and no help came he must have become discouraged again.

[2] *Ibid.*, 305.

CHAPTER LI

THE CLOUDS GATHER—THE CONSPIRATORS AT WORK

The authorities in general recognize how pleased the Administration was to discover that the army was safe and that, apparently, it truly intended at the time and for some days later to reinforce that army immediately; and that the Administration was able to reinforce it is equally undoubted. It is recognized too that about the 6th or 7th of July came a change in the attitude of the Administration, without any apparent cause. This change is ascribed by some writers to the bitter letter of McClellan to Stanton on June the 28th, containing this terrible indictment, "You have done your best to sacrifice this army." But the attitude of the Government about the first of July and Stanton's letter of July 5th refute this theory. Others believe that the Harrison's Bar letter produced a coolness. This is more plausible, and would tend strongly to persuade us, until we reflect that the attitude of the Government now under discussion was not a new one. It was merely a return to an old one.

On a second thought, a more mature reflection, doubtless Mr. Stanton became imbued with the idea that in his alarm at the supposed peril of the army and his relief and joy to find it safe he had been too hasty in resolving to reinforce it. What would this action probably have resulted in? As he himself had predicted, it would probably have secured the capture of Richmond within the month, and the sure and inevitable corollary of that success would have been the glorification of McClellan and the death of the young party which the "Autocrat of Rebellion, Emancipation, and Reconstruction" had been so assiduously fostering. The contemplated action would have been political madness. McClellan must

not capture Richmond! But after their outspoken recognition of the advantages of the present situation, their unequivocal declaration of intent to hurry troops to the James, and the measures already taken to carry out that intent, how could this course have been decently departed from? If we may safely conjecture the answer, judging from the attitude of the Government from that time on, it was this: "Delay action and let time determine." The suspension of Burnside's progress toward Harrison's Landing was the first act of renewed hostility, but its purpose was covert and not avowed; and from this time on fate seemed to direct events entirely to the Secretary's liking.

On the 10th of July the following communication was sent to the President:

"HEADQUARTERS,
"HARRISON'S BAR, July 10, 1862.

"HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES:

"Sir: After some inquiry, I find that my opinions agree essentially with the opinions of several officers whom I regard as the most able in this army, at the head of which is General Barnard, of the Engineers. I therefore venture to address a letter to your Excellency.

"The simple failure of this army to reach Richmond has given a serious aspect to our affairs, and after much reflection I have considered the subject of first importance to be the position which this army ought to occupy during the next two months.

"Can this army remain here encamped at Harrison's Bar?

"Clearly not, since the confinement to a small space, the heat, and sickliness of this camp would nearly destroy the army in two months, though no armed force should assail it. Moreover, the enemy being in possession of both banks of the James River above and below us, he will shortly find the means to cut us off from our supplies, or shut us up by means of fortifications and his abundant artillery, in such a manner as will give him time, ample time, to capture Washington before we could possibly go to its rescue.

"Can this army leave its present camp to go and attack Richmond?

"No; it cannot. To make this army strong enough to march on Richmond with any hope of success, it must be reenforced by at least 100,000 good troops. No officer here, whose opinion is worth one penny, will recommend a less number. To bring troops freshly raised at the North to this country in the months of July, August, and September would be to cast our resources into the sea. The raw troops would melt away and be ruined forever.

"Some of our officers think that to remove this army to the neighborhood of Washington would be a virtual abandonment of our cause. I cannot regard the matter in that light at all. This army has not been defeated in battle, nor has it been repulsed in this campaign as often as it has repulsed the enemy. It is now in a strong position, with all its baggage. Sickness, and the approach of a more sickly season, together with the superiority in numbers and sanitary advantages on the part of the enemy, render it proper and advisable that we should return to our capital and a healthy country. Did not the Confederates return to their capital from Manassas, and afterward from Williamsburg did they not retreat in confusion? In the West the two armies have often been successful and unsuccessful, and have each frequently retreated in Missouri and elsewhere. Those fluctuations have in the end inured to our advantage.

"To shut up this army on the James River is to make certain its destruction or its neutralization within the next two months, and then the North will be at the mercy of the South and the sport of the caprice of Europe.

"Bring this army back to the neighborhood of Washington, to spacious, healthy camps, pass some laws which I could suggest, and at the end of three months it will be worth much more against an enemy than it was last March. The laws I refer to would force our able-bodied men to join the army and to remain with it; would stop rogues and pettifoggers from using the courts of law to rob such as are absent fight-

ing, and would constrain to the public service all supplies and means of transportation at a reasonable price.

"When a large army reaches, or is placed in, a position where it cannot hold the enemy in check nor operate effectively against him, it is a military axiom to move that army without delay. With a large, well-appointed army in any camp from which it can be employed, we may bid defiance to our enemies. This army cannot be employed here, and the enemy may close its egress, for which reasons and many others I respectfully recommend that immediate instructions may be issued for its withdrawal.

"All the available gunboats and men-of-war ought to assist in the movement, which ought to be made within the next forty-eight hours.

"I have the honor to be, respectfully, your Excellency's most obedient servant,

"E. D. KEYES,
"Brigadier-General, Fourth Army Corps." [1]

General John G. Barnard is referred to as holding the same views.

But on July 2d General Barnard had written the following letter to General McClellan:

"HEADQUARTERS, July 2, 1862.

"DEAR GENERAL: It seems to me the only salvation is for this army to be ready promptly to reassume the offensive.

"For this we must immediately push our forces further forward, or we are bagged. Besides being able to shell us out, the enemy will entrench us in, and, shutting us up here with a small force, be off for Washington.

"The fresh troops (how many?) now here or on the river ought to enable us to push out at once and to assume an offensive as soon as our old army can be rested.

"But we need large reinforcements. The state of affairs is concealed in Washington to hide their own blunders, and the country will not respond to the crisis unless it is known.

[1] *Official Record*, XI, III, 313, 314.

We need 20,000 more men to fill up the ranks and form new regiments.

"A large part of Halleck's force, all that can be withdrawn, should come from the West.

"There is no use in writing. Should you not send at once an officer who will not be afraid to speak? And though such a messenger does not open his lips except to Lincoln and Stanton, the public will soon know that there is something concealed. It should be done by all means.

"To-day we must get ourselves enough out to save being shut in. There is no use in entrenching a line of no real utility, and what Duane can do to-day will only wear out his men for nothing.

"It is troops alone that can help us to-day. By to-morrow we will be able to know where to entrench.

"We must have fresh troops immediately in large numbers, and I would, if necessary, abandon Norfolk and New Berne to get them, and all the useless coast of South Carolina and Georgia, holding only Fort Pulaski.

"Pensacola is of no use, but I suppose may be held with few troops.

"Yours, etc.,

"J. G. BARNARD." [2]

On the 20th of July General Keyes wrote again, this time to General Meigs, but it was all fish for the same net and worked into Stanton's hands.

"HEADQUARTERS FOURTH CORPS,

"HARRISON'S BAR, July 21, 1862.

"BRIG.-GEN. M. C. MEIGS,

"Quartermaster-General U. S. Army:

"MY DEAR GENERAL: In times of crisis I always think of corresponding with you. I do not know the amount of your influence at this time, but whether you possess much or little, you ought now to exert all you possess to guard the state from the dangers that threaten it.

[2] McClellan, *Own Story*, 483, 484.

"You and I agreed in March and April, 1861, that it was proper to make war vigorously. We agreed after the battle of Bull Run that the Capital and the North were in danger, and, I doubt not, you will agree with me that both are in far greater danger now than at that time. The South has been made a unit by the mere continuance of the war, and their antipathies have been increased by our legislation, while the North has been made weak by divided counsels and an ignorance on the part of most persons of the cause of the war.

"This army has lost golden opportunities. If I could see you I would tell you how we lost them; but, being lost, repining will do no good, and we must endeavor to avoid the ruin which now threatens us.

"I will tell you some things which you may regard as facts: My corps has taken prisoners of contrabands from the enemy as many as half the number of days in the last three months. I have not failed with eye and voice to make searching examinations of all, and I am convinced that the officers and men of the Southern army are at this moment much more vigorous in health and more able for that reason to march and to fight than our army is.

"The South is not deficient in plain food in abundance. It is my opinion that their grain on hand and growing is enough for two years' supply. To think of starving them out is simply absurd, unless we can destroy their rails and water lines of communication, when their armies would starve simply on account of the badness of the Virginia roads in wet weather.

"This army is able to hold its present position, but cannot assume the offensive without a re-enforcement of at least 100,000 men. That is the least number any man will estimate whose opinion is worth more than a dream.

"The newspapers will tell you that the health of this army is improving. It is only apparently improving. Comparative rest has produced a seeming improvement during the last three weeks. I speak from no hearsay nor from any man's theory; I go every day and inspect several regiments. If any other officers do this, I do not know their names. I find that a ma-

jority of the generals are beginning to droop. I find the men are becoming weaker by the day—their minds and bodies are growing weak together—and, though I despise most theories, I will say that to pen up more than 100,000 men and animals in a space so small that you can find no point of that space which is one mile distant from its outside boundary on the James River in the months of July, August, and September is to secure disease, weakness, and nostalgia as a certain crop.

"Our enemies are not fools, and they will soon find means to shut up the James River below us or make its navigation enormously expensive to us. They will find the means also to annoy us in other ways, and unless we receive vast re-enforcements, they will succeed in ruining this whole army; and this army lost, the North is necessarily from that moment at the mercy of the South.

"Some persons affirm that it will have a bad moral effect or a bad political effect to withdraw this army, but will the effect be worse than to remain here and do nothing? We can neither operate against the enemy nor build up our own army on this spot. Then why do we stay here?

"The South has already put forth all its strength and will continue to do so. We have not, and we must bide our time and employ our means to the best advantage.

"Do you fear intervention? It will not be less to be feared if we have an army where it can be employed than to have one where it cannot be employed.

"Do you fear cost? It will cost just as much (and more if you estimate for sickness) to maintain the army and build it up here as it would to carry it away to a healthy district and build it up, to return the whole to the James River next October.

"If the movement begins to-morrow or the next day, or even one week hence, I think this army could be removed in safety; after that its removal would be of doubtful possibility. If, therefore, you value the safety of this country, do one of two things without delay, remove this army or send to it a re-enforcement of 100,000 men.

"If this army should be taken to some place between the

enemy and our own possessions, we might allege health as a motive for the movement, bid defiance to the South, and by and by to England and France also, but by remaining here in our present condition we submit to chance the very ark of our safety.

"Please let me hear from you.

"Your friend,

"E. D. KEYES.

"P. S.—I have kept the foregoing two days to determine whether or not I should change my opinion and retain it. I have concluded, however, to send it; the sickliness of this country in August and September being one of the strongest reasons for withdrawing."

"(Indorsement.)

"July 28, 1862.

"Respectfully referred to Major-General Halleck.

"M. C. MEIGS,

"Quartermaster-General." [3]

An English, German or French officer who dared so to interfere would be court-martialed for disloyalty to his commander.

For some reason that has never been explained, General Wool, who was commandant at Fortress Monroe at the coming of McClellan, conceived an inimical feeling toward the General which is exhibited in various letters obviously intended to work injury without displaying any hostility. These letters are dated, respectively, April 7,[4] April 11,[5] May 10,[6] May 19.[7] His letter of May 24 is especially cunning and vicious.[8]

On June the 1st General Wool and General Dix changed positions by order of the War Department, so General Wool was now at Baltimore; but he did not lose interest in the commander, as his letter of July the 21st shows:

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[3] *Official Record*, XI, III, 331, 332.
[4] *Ibid.*, 76.
[5] *Ibid.*, 88.
[6] *Ibid.*, 174.
[7] *Ibid.*, 181, 182.
[8] *Ibid.*, 189, 190.

"BALTIMORE, July 21, 1862.

"HON. E. M. STANTON:

"MY DEAR FRIEND: I hope you will allow me to consider you as such. 'Coming events cast their shadows before them.' The rebels are not without well-founded hopes that England and France will interfere in their behalf. The late disaster to our arms at Richmond and the position of Major-General McClellan's army will aid them much in their anticipations. The rebels will do all in their power to keep McClellan where he is with his army, in the hope that death and desertion will so thin his ranks that by fall his army will be reduced one-half. Altogether our position is far from being an agreeable one. We ought to be up and doing. We want troops, and must have them. Measures ought to be adopted to apprehend and send back to their regiments the thousands of deserters scattered throughout the country. These with the men on furlough would make a respectable army.

"It is said that the rebels would willingly exchange Richmond for Washington. Our generals have not shown much tact in acquiring information in regard to the movements of the rebel armies. The latter disappear from before them with all the material of war without their knowing it for days, as was the case at Manassas, Yorktown, and Corinth. They have been too often assailed by large forces without the slightest knowledge of their approach, and of course disaster follows, as in the case of Generals Grant, Shields, and Banks. Our generals do not appear to understand the stratagems of war, and they leave their rear and depots of supplies unprotected and unguarded, as in the case of McClellan's rear being attacked, when he lost much property, as also in the case when Jackson returned to Richmond. We find them too often surprised, as in the case of Fair Oaks and Grant near Corinth, and but for the timely arrival of gunboats the army of the latter would have been captured.

"I do not mention these things because I desire the command of an army. Far from it. I assure you I am content to perform any duty you may think proper to assign to me.

My only wish and desire is to put down this infamous rebellion, and to have the instigators punished as they deserve to be. Whoever may accomplish this, and whether it be McClellan, Halleck, Pope, or any one else, I will be at least one of the first to rejoice and to do honor to the conqueror.

"In conclusion, allow me to call your attention to the bounty about to be paid to those who may enlist in the service. I believe it will amount to something like $90 to each man, including $50 by the states. New York gives $50 in addition to what the United States gives. In drawing up your instructions for myself, I hope you will allow the $50 to be given by New York.

"Always and faithfully yours,

"JOHN E. WOOL,
"Major-General." [9]

In no country but ours could such letters be written with impunity and such impunity is not to our credit. It does not appear that General McClellan ever suspected the enmity of General Wool or ever knew of any of the above letters written by Wool and Keyes.

One of the most notable features of this period is the care which Stanton took to keep his hostile acts concealed; yet no author who writes of this period hesitates to fix the responsibility of the attitude of the Government entirely upon the wily Secretary.

A bright plan now occurred to him,—namely, that of having a nominal general-in-chief, one who in return for the honor and the salary would bear all blame, while in fact he would be only the clerk of Mr. Stanton. Accordingly, on July the 11th, 1862, General Halleck was appointed. In the Harrison's Bar letter General McClellan had said that there should be one head of all the armies. So Mr. Stanton stated to the press, and the press stated to the people, that General Halleck was appointed on the direct advice of General McClellan, as if McClellan had been a highly influential counsellor of state and had urged the selection of Halleck!

[9] *Official Record*, XI, III, 330.

No man was ever so hotly denounced for incompetency as the new general-in-chief; but the incompetency was that of his master, Mr. Stanton. Halleck had no plans, originated nothing, conceived nothing. That Stanton was in fact the general-in-chief is boastfully shown by his biographers, Mr. Flower and Mr. Gorham, and from another point of view by Mr. Welles—in his published diary.

On July the 8th the President visited the Army of the Potomac. His purpose in going is clearly indicated by the manner in which he spent his time while there. It is to be regretted that it cannot be said that he went there as a prudent but unbiased executive to make an open, straightforward examination,—in good faith to ascertain if the contemplated increase of the army was really as advisable as it had been represented to be. For, if such had been the case, a full conference with the commander would have been the first step; and if it had been a question as to the health of the army and what would be the result of its remaining through the summer, the chief medical authority of the army, Dr. Jonathan Letterman, would have been first consulted.

The President went there as an adverse attorney might go, to gather evidence to fortify a predetermined conclusion and to overthrow the commander's wishes and expectations. The President did not consult the commander, nor did he inform him of the object of his visit. The President did not consult Dr. Letterman or any other medical authority. All such persons were apparently assumed to be antagonists, and were not admitted into the President's confidence. Unaccompanied by the commander he called upon the various generals separately, and got from each of them an opinion as to what should be done with the army, upon the hypothesis that it was not to be reinforced for a long and indefinite time. Basing their views solely upon that hypothesis, a few said that if they were to have no reinforcements, then, for sanitary reasons, the army should be withdrawn. But the answers so elicited the authorities treated as urgent and unconditional appeals for the withdrawal of the army. Even General Franklin, understanding that the army was not to be reinforced,

said that he thought it should be withdrawn. He told Mr. Swinton long afterward, as did General Newton also, that if reinforcements had been expected he would have been altogether in favor of remaining.[10]

This proviso made so little impression upon the mind of the President that when a few months later Generals Franklin and Smith strongly urged operations from the James as a base,—a view they had always held,—Mr. Lincoln expressed surprise, and in effect charged General Franklin with having changed his views.

As the days sped on, the Government should have been convinced that the surest defense and protection of Washington lay in the presence of the Union army on the James. The great army of Lee was inert and paralyzed. That the Union army was in peril because of unsanitary conditions is disproved by the report of Dr. Letterman of July 18th, 1862, in which he gives this opinion: "The diseases prevalent in our army are generally of a mild type and are not increasing. Their chief causes are, in my opinion, the want of proper food (and that improperly prepared), exposure to the malaria of swamps and the inclemencies of the weather, excessive fatigue and want of natural rest, combined with great excitement of several days' duration, and the exhaustion consequent thereon." [11] In other words, the army's condition was no cause for alarm, and was chiefly the result, not of the present location, but of the hardships of the Peninsula campaign.

The proof most convincing and most readily grasped lies in the well-known fact that in the middle of June, 1864, what was left of the Army of the Potomac reached the James in a most unfavorable condition to resist disease, and remained there until the following April, without any question of peril from disease ever becoming the subject of discussion.

On the occasion of the visit of the President, some questions were asked of General McClellan as if he had been merely one of many independent witnesses, all of equal grade,

[10] *Army of the Potomac*, 171, n.
[11] *Official Record*, XI, III, 349.

instead of his being the only one who could fully enlighten the Administration and supply the reasons and arguments for action. One who is having a house built does not go to the mechanics employed upon it to discuss the plans; he confers only with the architect.

If the evidence secured by Mr. Lincoln on his visit to the James had supplied a plausible pretext, McClellan would surely have been called home at once; but Heintzelman and Sumner, two of the corps commanders forced upon McClellan, disappointed Stanton's hopes, and were as cordial in support of the commander's views as was General Porter. General Sumner stoutly declared that to take the army away was "to give up the cause," and that the prospective condition of health was as good there as in any part of Eastern Virginia. General Heintzelman said that to take the army away would be ruinous to the country and that the prospective condition of health was excellent. General Keyes, the third of the corps commanders selected by Stanton because they were against McClellan's coast plan, was, as his letters show, in favor of bringing the army back only for the summer and then returning to the James. General Porter said that the present and prospective condition of health was good, and when asked as to whether the removal of the army could be safely effected, replied: "Impossible. Move the army and ruin the country." [12] Franklin favored removal, Mr. Rhodes assures us too, only upon the understanding that the army was not to be reinforced.

To the general reader this underground method of operating is so repellent, so lacking in fairness, justice, and candor when exhibited in any one, but above all in a public official dealing with public affairs, that, taking the idealistic view of Mr. Lincoln's character, it seems incredible that he could have engaged in it. Those familiar with the game of politics, however, know that its ethics are peculiar, and that a man may be honest, kind, and exemplary in every other relation of life, yet, as a politician, he may do what seem to the ordinary citizen utterly irreconcilable things. The rule is: "Destroy

[12] Lincoln, *Letters*, II, 275-277.

your rival; he would destroy you, if he could." And Stanton had persuaded the President that McClellan was a dangerous political rival.

As we have seen, Mr. Lincoln used his patronage to win over his enemies, to make them his friends. Those that were already his friends, even the most worthy, got little or nothing. As he viewed it, what he could get gratuitously it was folly to pay for.[13] Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Herndon maneuvered to get a political article into a Springfield paper which nearly ruined the editor, as it was directly contrary to his views.[14]

On the 9th of August, 1864, Mr. Lincoln wrote to General Banks as follows:

"EXECUTIVE MANSION,
"WASHINGTON, August 9, 1864.

"MAJOR-GENERAL BANKS:

"I have just seen the new constitution adopted by the Convention of Louisiana; and I am anxious that it shall be ratified by the people. I will thank you to let the civil officers in Louisiana, holding under me, know that this is my wish, and let me know at once who of them openly declare for the constitution, and who of them, if any, decline to so declare.

"Yours truly,
"A. LINCOLN." [15]

The coercive influence of the Executive was thus used to bring about a desired political result, and following up the later correspondence, it looks as if General Banks resigned because he did not like such *military* work.

As it was known to all that the Government could easily and quickly reinforce the army, if it decided so to do, and as the days passed and the reinforcements did not come, the alarm was sounded throughout the army that all their trudging through the mud, all their exposure to the elements, all

[13] Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln*, 243, 244.
[14] *Ibid.*, II, 38, 39.
[15] *Letters*, I, 42, 43.

the bloodshed and lives offered up, especially in that terrible week of carnage,—all this was now, when the fruit of it was ripe for the picking and within easy reach, to be thrown away, and they were to return to Washington and fight their way back to Richmond again upon a new and sanguinary line.

It was felt that Stanton for some sinister purpose intended to remove the army, and was only awaiting a plausible pretext upon which to base the action.

CHAPTER LII

THE STRUGGLE TO REMAIN

When the significance of the delay fully dawned upon the army, the surprise, grief, and indignation at the attitude of the Government was intense. It seemed as if the lives of soldiers counted for nothing. The army had won a great advantage, and won it at the price of more than 15,000 lives. That advantage was now to be wrested from it, and its labors and bloodshed were to begin anew. The calamity about to befall the army was not, however, to come upon it without a noble struggle against what was morally an act of darkest treason. If military etiquette had permitted the army to send a protest and a petition, the fondness shown for McClellan by the army at all times left no doubt as to the fervor of the appeal or the warmth of the remonstrance. We have already quoted from the strong and confident letter of Colonel Ingalls to General Meigs, expressing the certainty of success when the army should be properly reinforced.

Commodore Wilkes on the 5th of August sent the following patriotic and glowing letter to his superior, the Secretary of the Navy:

"FORT MONROE, VA.,
"August 5, 1862,—1 A. M.

"GIDEON WELLES, Secretary of the Navy:

"I have had submitted to me the orders sent to General McClellan, and I must say I never was more astonished than at their contents. The withdrawal of the Army of the Potomac would be the most suicidal act that any administration could commit, and be attended with every disaster that could befall our army—causing its utter demoralization and total

destruction and the waste of all its vast equipage—and I must say, if anything can, would entirely ruin the Union cause by its entire destruction. I can now speak advisedly upon its position and that of the naval force which I command. My standpoint of view is different from that of any other person in the country, and although I have not ventured, as others, to express the opinions I entertain, I deem it imperative on me now to state what they are.

"The naval force has now under its control the supply of the army, and I indulge in no fears of keeping it entirely free from any serious impediment. The force I have is not entirely sufficient to begin active operations, but the moment I receive the additional vessels the Department is to supply me I am ready for active offensive operations, and with the aid of the army on the north bank of the James River I have no doubt that Richmond can be taken. It may require hard knocks, but success, I think, is finally certain. When Fort Darling is taken the way will be open, and a combined attack from the north shore by the army and navy forces will be difficult, nay impossible, to resist. My information relative to the difficulties to be encountered is consistent, and, I think, trustworthy, and my officers and men are all in spirits, and full of energy to undertake their part of the service. An abandonment of the army position would have a great effect to destroy the animus of the whole fleet. The aid I could give General McClellan in a retrograde movement would be comparatively trifling, and I have no transportation to offer. The situation of the army is secure under any event. Its position now is strong; the several corps are again re-established, and all are in excellent spirits for the coming campaign and the investment and taking of Richmond. My information is that the enemy are concentrating their forces near and around Petersburg, and there has been a great withdrawal of troops from Richmond. I think the general impression among the rebels is that it is McClellan's intention to throw his force across the river, and while they are under this delusion the true movement may be made on Richmond along the north bank of the James River as soon as the communication by railroad is

destroyed, which it is my intention to effect; and had I been furnished with the scout canoes, to enable me to reach them by the creeks, the bridges and railroads would have been ere this broken up and destroyed. I expressed to you my woful disappointment when I saw the character of the boats sent me. I shall say nothing further on this at present, but it will readily be seen on an inspection of the map how completely this would operate to prevent the enemy's force from returning to support those in Richmond. A combined movement by General Pope with concentrated force and General McClellan at the same time would effect this much-desired object, I have no doubt, supported as the latter would be by the naval force under my command acting in harmonious co-operation.

"Thus much for the onward progress. Now let me consider the retreat and abandonment of the position. In the first place, an entire demoralization of the troops and their officers would take place. There is no transportation adequate to the move, and all the splendid equipage gathered at a vast expense would necessarily have to be destroyed to prevent falling into the hands of the enemy, and as soon as the rebels discovered, if not captured, and an entire disgrace fall upon the Union cause, and well it might be said this great cause had been deserted.

"As to the time it would take is another consideration, and this could not be less than five or six weeks at the least, if it were done by water, and the rebels, apprised of the moment, would rush to the banks of the James River and cause such annoyances that would make even that route very precarious, and a series of attacks on our part necessary to destroy their batteries, which would be fully equal to what is to be encountered toward Richmond. Another course is the only one possible in my view, and that is a retreat by land. The Chickahominy and all its sad details of battle again fought over, and by the time the army reached its transports at Fort Monroe, or higher up, its morale, spirit, and energy would be entirely gone, and instead of being able to re-enforce [the] other army in the field by the Rappahannock, it would have

wasted itself away. Indeed, it would be a sad beacon for the country and its armies to mourn over, and to raise the hopes and strength of the rebels be the greatest blow that the Union cause has ever felt. I trust in God this direful act will not be carried out—our noble cause will be ruined if it is—and that we may be left here to wend our way to Richmond. General McClellan is confident as I am in the result—the capture of the rebel capital, and of maintaining the honor, safety, and glory of the Union and its army.

"I pray you lay these views before the President, with a hopeful wish on my part that they will be impressed on his mind as forcibly as they are on mine. Truthful and conscientious I know them to be, and a firm conviction on my part, as well as General McClellan's, of the disaster which must follow in the one case and a glorious termination in the other.

"Respectfully,

"CHARLES WILKES,

"Commodore." [1]

At this critical juncture, with so much at stake, there was no Cabinet discussion of the situation. An open, frank comparison of views would often have prevented errors. Mr. Welles tells us how very rare such meetings were. The Secretary of the Navy understood that the movement could spring from nothing but Stanton's determination to get rid of McClellan, and expressed his protest in one cogent sentence: "The object in bringing that army back to Washington, in order to start a new march overland and regain the abandoned position, I did not understand, unless it was to get rid of McClellan." [2]

The first direct notice to McClellan that the Government had resumed its attitude of coldness and hostility was in the letter from the President, dated July 13, 1862, in which he says:

[1] *Official Record*, XI, III, 356.
[2] *Lincoln and Seward*, 193.

"EXECUTIVE MANSION,
"WASHINGTON, July 13, 1862.

"MAJOR-GENERAL McCLELLAN:

"MY DEAR SIR: I am told that over 160,000 men have gone into your army on the Peninsula. When I was with you the other day we made out 86,500 remaining, leaving 73,500 to be accounted for. I believe 23,500 will cover all the killed, wounded, and missing in all your battles and skirmishes, leaving 50,000 who have left otherwise. Not more than 5,000 of these have died, leaving 45,000 of your army still alive and not with it. I believe half or two-thirds of them are fit for duty to-day. Have you any more perfect knowledge of this than I have? If I am right, and you had these men with you, you could go into Richmond in the next three days. How can they be got to you, and how can they be prevented from getting away in such numbers for the future?

"A. LINCOLN." [8]

This is a nagging letter, an exasperating letter. It is a silly letter, which, if he had been left to himself, the common sense of the President would have prevented him from sending. It was sent under pressure. The machinery for getting back absentees lies, not with the general in the field, but with the War Department. A time when immediate reinforcements were urgently needed and could have been easily supplied was no time for the discussion of questions of that nature. General McClellan had already been urging the War Department to provide a remedy, as his reply shows:

"HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
"July 15, 1862. (Received 8 P. M.)

"HIS EXCELLENCY ABRAHAM LINCOLN, President:

"Your telegram of yesterday (July 13) has been received. The difference between the effective force of troops and that expressed in returns is considerable in every army. All commanders find the actual strength less than the strength represented on paper. I have not my own returns for the tri-

[8] *Ibid.*, 319.

monthly period since arriving at Fort Monroe at hand at this moment, but even on paper I will not, I am confident, be found to have received 160,000 officers and men present, although present and absent my returns will be accountable for that number. You can arrive at the numbers of absentees, however, better by my return of July 10, which will be ready to send shortly. I find from official reports that I have present for duty: Officers, 3,125; enlisted men, 85,450; in all present for duty, 88,665; absent by authority, 34,472; without authority, 3,778; present and absent, 144,407.

"The number of officers and men present sick is 16,619. The medical director will fully explain the cause of this amount of sickness, which I hope will begin to decrease shortly. Thus the number of men really absent is 38,250. Unquestionably of the number present, some are absent—say 40,000 will cover the absentees. I quite agree with you that more than one-half of these men are probably fit for duty to-day. I have frequently called the attention lately of the War Department to the evil of absenteeism. I think that the exciting of the public press to persistent attack upon officers and soldiers absent from the army, the employment of deputy marshals to arrest and send back deserters, summary dismissal of officers whose names are reported for being absent without leave, and the publication of their names, will exhaust the remedies applicable by the War Department.

"It is to be remembered that many of those absent by authority are those who have got off either sick or wounded or under pretense of sickness or wounds, and having originally the pretext of authority, are still reported absent by authority. If I could receive back the absentees and could get my sick men up, I would need but small re-enforcements to enable me to take Richmond. After the battle of Williamsburg, Fair Oaks, etc., most of these men got off. Well men got on board hospital boats taking care of sick, etc. There is always confusion and haste in shipping and taking care of wounded after a battle. There is no time for nice examination of permits to pass here or there.

"I can now control people getting away better, for the

natural opportunities are better. Leakages by desertion occur in every army and will occur here of course, but I do not at all, however, anticipate anything like a recurrence of what has taken place.

"GEORGE B. McCLELLAN.
"Major-General." [4]

Mr. Rhodes recognizes that the Administration's change of feeling took place during the first week of July, and that this fact is evidenced by a letter from Seward to Weed of that date, in which he said: "Most painful doubts exist whether the army however reinforced can make a successful or hopeful attack on Richmond. If that is correct, reinforcements sent there will only aggravate the impotence of the position. . . . It is also feared that the rebels, holding McClellan there, will organize a new and vigorous campaign against Washington." [5]

Both the contents of this letter and the date of it show that it was not the Harrison's Bar letter which effected the change of attitude. Mr. Rhodes tells us that he could not ascertain what caused it. Surely not; his optimistic view of the motives of Mr. Stanton shut him out from the truth. Assuming that Mr. Stanton was a wise, brave, and noble man, seeking solely the best interests of the Union, his change of attitude is indeed inexplicable.

On July the 7th General McClellan wired the President: "My men in splendid spirits and anxious to try it again." [6]

From the 11th to the 30th of July the correspondence, as we have seen, shows that McClellan wished to remain.

On the 30th of July the commander received the following letter:

"WASHINGTON, July 30, 1862,—8 P. M.

"In order to enable you to move in any direction, it is necessary to relieve you of your sick. The Surgeon-General

[4] *Lincoln and Seward*, 321.
[5] *History of the United States*, IV, 96.
[6] *Official Record*, XI, 1, 73.

has therefore been directed to make arrangements for them at other places, and the Quartermaster-General to provide transportation. I hope you will send them away as quickly as possible, and advise me of their removal.

"H. W. HALLECK,
"Major-General.

"Maj.-Gen. George B. McClellan." [7]

This letter holds out the hope that the reinforcing of the army is still under consideration, but the order of removal was then already made and held concealed. The removal of the sick was the first act in the removal of the army. To the majority of the foregoing letters of General McClellan that were written after July 13th the President did not vouchsafe the courtesy of an answer. It was clearly Stanton's plan to conduct everything himself, at the same time throwing the whole responsibility on Halleck. He had found that the veil of using the President was far too thin. The whole country saw through it and charged the military policy of the administration wholly to the Secretary of War. How little Halleck had to do with the conduct of the war the most cursory reading of the pages of Mr. Gorham or Mr. Flower will quickly reveal. When General Halleck appeared upon the scene in the middle of July the President retired from the stage. That was the apparent change, but in fact the same hand moved the pieces upon the military chess-board at all times after January 20th, 1862; and the conviction will constantly gather strength that through him the nation, despite all its strength and resources, narrowly escaped destruction, and that the appalling cost of the war thereafter in life and money was chiefly due to him.

Earnestly and urgently and patriotically pleading with the President to adopt the course wherein the sequel has proven lay the salvation of the Union, and finding his arguments disregarded and his petitions met with almost absolute silence, McClellan addressed his appeals on and after July the 28th to

[7] *Official Record*, XI, 1, 76, 77.

General Halleck. But it made no difference to whom they were sent,—Halleck, Lincoln, or Stanton,—they went into the same pigeonhole and were dealt with by the same astute foe of McClellan and of the nation's welfare,—Edwin M. Stanton.

CHAPTER LIII

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES—HALLECK COMES

General Halleck arrived in Washington on the 23d of July, 1862, and on the 25th visited the Army of the Potomac. The result, as it seemed to McClellan, is expressed in his letter of July 25th to his wife, "I think Halleck will support me and give me the means to take Richmond." [1] This implies to those who know the real intent of the Administration at this time that Halleck simulated an approval of McClellan's views, doubtless under instructions from Stanton. Observe how differently Halleck pictured this interview.

"Memorandum for the Secretary of War.

"WASHINGTON, D. C., July 27, 1862.

"In accordance with the directions of the President, I left here on the afternoon of the 24th and reached the camp of General McClellan on the afternoon of the 25th.

"I stated to the general that the object of my visit was to ascertain from him his views and wishes in regard to future operations. He said that he proposed to cross the James River at that point, attack Petersburg, and cut off the enemy's communications by that route south, making no further demonstration for the present against Richmond. I stated to him very frankly my views in regard to the danger and impracticability of the plan, to most of which he finally agreed.

"I then told him that it seemed to me a military necessity to concentrate his forces with those of General Pope on some point where they could at the same time cover Washington and operate against Richmond, unless he felt strong enough to attack the latter place, with a strong probability of success,

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 455.

with the re-enforcements which could be given to him. He expressed the opinion that with 30,000 re-enforcements he could attack Richmond with 'a good chance of success.' I replied that I was authorized by the President to promise only 20,000, and that if he could not take Richmond with that number we must devise some plan for withdrawing his troops from their present position to some point where they could unite with those of General Pope without exposing Washington. He thought there would be no serious difficulty in withdrawing his forces for that purpose, but the movement he said would have a demoralizing influence on his own troops, and suggested the propriety of their holding their present position till sufficient re-enforcements could be collected. I told him that I had no authority to consider that proposition, and that he must decide between advising the withdrawal of his forces to some point to be agreed upon to meet General Pope or to advance on Richmond with the re-enforcements which the President had decided upon; that he had decided that question by fixing his re-enforcements at 20,000, and I could promise no addition to that number.

"I inferred from his remarks that under these circumstances he would prefer to withdraw and unite with General Pope; but I advised him to consult his officers and give me a final answer in the morning. He did so, and the next morning informed me that he would attack Richmond with the re-enforcements promised. He would not say that he thought the probabilities of success were in his favor, but that there was 'a chance,' and he was 'willing to try it.'

"In regard to the force of the enemy, he expressed the opinion that it was not less than 200,000, and I found that in this estimate most of his officers agreed. His own effective force was, officers and men, about 90,000, which, with 20,000 re-enforcements, would make 110,000.

"I had no time or opportunity to investigate the facts upon which these estimates were based, and therefore can give no opinion as to their correctness.

"His officers, as I understood, were about equally divided

in opinion in regard to the policy of withdrawing or of risking an attack on Richmond.

"H. W. HALLECK,
"General-in-Chief." [2]

These details of the interview are so utterly at variance with McClellan's numerous letters touching the same matters as to raise the strongest suspicion of their correctness, and to make us regret that we have no detailed statement of the interview from the commander of the Army of the Potomac. The work upon his *Own Story* was evidently little more than half done when he died. Like Carlyle's *French Revolution,* his first manuscript was destroyed, but, unlike Carlyle, McClellan did not live long enough fully to repair his loss.

Mr. Swinton quotes from this statement of General Halleck and comments upon it as follows: "I stated to him [McClellan] that the object of my visit was to ascertain from him his views and wishes in regard to future operations. He said that he proposed to cross the James River at that point [Harrison's Landing. General Grant, two years afterwards, crossed a few miles below], attack Petersburg, and cut off the enemy's communications by that route South, making no further demonstration, for the present, against Richmond. I stated to him very frankly my views in regard to the danger and impracticability of the plan. . . ." [3] "It would appear that General Grant had less respect for General Halleck's views of 'the danger and impracticability of the plan,' seeing that two years afterwards he adopted that precise plan, and took Richmond and destroyed Lee by it! Nor can it be said that circumstances, so far as regards the defense of Washington, differed in the one case from those in the other—excepting that they were such as to warrant the adoption of the plan by General McClellan much more than by General Grant—for in 1862 there were ten men left behind for the defense of Washington to one in 1864." [4]

[2] *Official Record,* XI, III. 337.
[3] *Report on the Conduct of the War,* I, 454.
[4] *Army of the Potomac,* 168, n.

The situation as Mr. Swinton saw it was then as follows: "In transferring the Army of the Potomac to the James River, the fundamental idea of its commander was to secure a line of operations whereby, with a refreshed and re-enforced army, a new campaign, under more promising auspices, might be undertaken. The position of the army, at once threatening the communications of Richmond and enabling it to spring on the rear of the Confederate force should it attempt an aggressive movement northward, seemed the most advantageous possible, whether for offensive operations or for insuring the safety of the national capital. General McClellan brought back to Harrison's Landing between eighty-five thousand and ninety thousand men; and his view was, that all the resources at the command of the government should be at once forwarded to him. Having the James River now open, a line of supplies, he had formed the bold design of transferring the Army of the Potomac to the south bank of that river, and operating against the communications of Richmond by way of Petersburg." [5]

The historian adds: "There appears at first to have been an intention on the part of the administration to adopt this judicious course."

On the 26th of July the following communication was sent to the new general-in-chief:

"HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
"BERKELEY, July 26, 1862.

"MAJ.-GEN. H. W. HALLECK,
"Commanding U. S. Army:

"GENERAL: I have seen to-day nearly a thousand of our sick and wounded just returned from Richmond. Some refugees have also arrived and a number of surgeons and chaplains taken prisoners at Bull Run. All of these who have enjoyed any opportunities of observation unite in stating that re-enforcements are pouring into Richmond from the South.

"Dr. L. H. Stone, U. S. Army, saw at Charlotte from 7,000 to 8,000 troops en route to Richmond. He and others

[5] *Ibid.*, 167.

unite in stating that it is quite positive that the troops on James Island (Charlotte) have arrived in Richmond and that the Southern states are being drained of their garrisons to re-enforce the army in my front. It is said that the troops of Beauregard's old army are also en route hither. This last is not positive, and I hope to learn the truth in regard to it to-morrow.

"Three regiments—one South Carolina, one North Carolina, and one Georgia—reached Richmond yesterday. Supplies are being rapidly pushed in by all routes. It would appear that Longstreet is in front of Richmond on this side of the James; D. H. Hill at Fort Darling and vicinity.

"Our cavalry pickets on Charles City road were driven in to-day by a heavy force of cavalry and some artillery. Averill started after them with a sufficient force. I have not yet heard the result.

"Allow me to urge most strongly that all the troops of Burnside and Hunter, together with all that can possibly be spared from other points, be sent to me at once. I am sure that you will agree with me that the true defense of Washington consists in a rapid and heavy blow given by this army upon Richmond.

"Can you not possibly draw 15,000 or 20,000 men from the West to re-enforce me temporarily? They can return the moment we gain Richmond. Please give weight to this suggestion; I am sure it merits it.

"I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

"GEO. B. MCCLELLAN,
"Major-General Commanding." [6]

Stanton's letters of approval and affection dated July 5th should be remembered. As Mr. Rhodes admits, nothing could have been warmer than Stanton's expression of confidence and assurance of support.[7] Yet, about the middle of July, Chase and Stanton advised the President to remove McClel-

[6] *Official Record*, XI, III, 333, 334.
[7] *Ibid.*, 97.

lan and send Pope to the James. This was not done, but the command of the army was offered to Burnside, who refused it.[8] Pope told Chase about the same time that he had urged the President to displace McClellan.

A rumor having reached Washington that the enemy were moving southward with their main force, leaving a small force in Richmond, General Halleck suggested that McClellan press the rebels in order to verify the report.

Accordingly, a few days later McClellan reoccupied Malvern Hill and drove the rebels toward Richmond.

On the 2d of August General Dix, in a letter to General Halleck from Fortress Monroe, said:

"I trust the importance of this command (though I could have no personal objection) may not be increased by the withdrawal of the Army of the Potomac; a measure, as I learn, still under consideration. I cannot err, I am sure, when I say it would be nearly fatal. It would break the spirit of the country, now exceedingly depressed in some quarters, and go very far to insure intervention from abroad. If we can ever reach Richmond, it seems to me the object can be best effected from the position we now occupy. At all events I feel a painful conviction that we cannot bear a retrograde movement at this moment. I have conversed freely with General Burnside on this subject before you were here and since his return, and he concurs with me entirely.

"Excuse these suggestions, and believe me, respectfully and truly, yours,

"JOHN A. DIX,
"Major-General."[9]

I find no answer to this manly and patriotic letter, but no doubt it was communicated by General Halleck to his superiors. It was far too late to change the fixed plans of the Administration; but if it had been three weeks earlier, it would have been equally ignored. It was useless to appeal to Halleck. He was merely a lever moved by the hand of Stanton.

[8] *Ibid.*, 96, 103.
[9] *Ibid.*, 347, 348.

The following communication, evidently spontaneous, I regard of high value to the student of this period:

"WASHINGTON, July 30, 1862.

"MAJ.-GEN. GEORGE B. McCLELLAN,

"Commanding, etc., Army of the Potomac:

"MY DEAR GENERAL: You are probably aware that I hold my present position contrary to my own wishes, and that I did everything in my power to avoid coming to Washington; but after declining several invitations from the President I received the order of the 11th instant, which left me no option.

"I have always had strong personal objections to mingling in the politico-military affairs of Washington. I never liked the place, and I really believed I could be much more useful in the West than here. I had acquired some reputation there, but here I could hope for none, and I greatly feared that whatever I might do I should receive more abuse than thanks. There seemed to be a disposition in the public press to cry down any one who attempted to serve the country instead of party. This was particularly the case with you, as I understood, and I could not doubt that it would be in a few weeks the case with me. Under these circumstances I could not see how I could be of much use here. Nevertheless, being ordered, I was obliged to come.

"In whatever has occurred heretofore you have had my full approbation and cordial support. There was no one in the army under whom I could serve with greater pleasure, and I now ask from you that same support and co-operation and that same free interchange of opinions as in former days. If we disagree in opinion, I know that we will do so honestly and without unkind feelings. The country demands of us that we act together and with cordiality. I believe we can and will do so. Indeed we must do so if we expect to put down the rebellion. If we permit personal jealousies to interfere for a single moment with our operations we shall not only injure the cause but ruin ourselves. But I am satisfied that neither of us will do this, and that we will work together with all our might and bring the war to an early termination.

"I have written to you frankly, assuring you of my friendship and confidence, believing that my letter would be received with the same kind feelings in which it is written.

"Yours truly,

"H. W. HALLECK." [10]

To this General McClellan made a very able and interesting reply.

"HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,

"BERKELEY, Aug. 1, 1862.

"MAJ.-GEN. H. W. HALLECK,

"Commanding U. S. Army:

"MY DEAR GENERAL: Your kind and very welcome letter of the 30th reached me this evening.

"My own experience enables me to appreciate most fully the difficulties and unpleasant features of your position. I have passed through it all and most cordially sympathize with you, for I regard your place, under present circumstances, as one of the most unpleasant under the Government. Of one thing, however, you may be sure, and that is of my full and cordial support in all things.

"Had I been consulted as to who was to take my place I would have advised your appointment. So far as you are concerned I feel toward you and shall act precisely as if I had urged you for the place you hold. There is not one particle of feeling or jealousy in my heart toward you. Set your mind perfectly at rest on that score. No one of your old and tried friends will work with you more cordially and more honestly than I shall.

"If we are permitted to do so, I believe that together we can save this unhappy country and bring this war to a comparatively early termination. The doubt in my mind is whether the selfish politicians will allow us to do so. I fear the results of the civil policy inaugurated by recent acts of Congress and practically enunciated by General Pope in his series of orders to the Army of Virginia.

"It is my opinion that this contest should be conducted

[10] *Official Record*, XI, III, 343.

by us as a war, and as a war between civilized nations; that our efforts should be directed toward crushing the armed masses of the rebels, not against the people; but that the latter should, so far as military necessities permit, be protected in their constitutional, civil, and personal rights.

"I think that the question of slavery should not enter into this war. Solely making military uses of their slaves, we should avoid any proclamations of general emancipation, and should protect inoffensive citizens in the possession of that, as well as of other kinds of property. If we do not actively protect them in this respect, we should at least avoid taking an active part on the other side, and let the negro take care of himself.

"The people of the South should understand that we are not making war upon the institution of slavery, but that if they submit to the Constitution and laws of the Union they will be protected in their constitutional rights of every nature. I think that pillaging and outrages on persons ought not to be tolerated; that private property and persons should enjoy all the protection we can afford them compatible with the necessities of our position. I would have the conduct of the Union troops present a strong contrast with that of the rebel armies, and prove by our actions that the Government is, as we profess it to be, benign and beneficent; that wherever its power extends, protection and security exist for all who do not take an active part against us. Peculiar circumstances may force us to depart from these principles in exceptional cases; but I would have these departures the exceptions, not the rule. I and the army under my command are fighting to restore the Union and supremacy of its laws, not for revenge. I therefore deprecate and view with infinite dread, any policy which tends to render impossible the reconstruction of the Union, and to make this contest simply a useless effusion of blood.

"We need more men. The old regiments of this army should be promptly filled by immediate drafting, if necessary. We should present such an overwhelming force as to make success certain, be able to follow it up, and to convince the people of the South that resistance is useless.

"I know that our ideas as to the concentration of forces agree perfectly. I believe that the principles I have expressed in this letter accord with your own views. I sincerely hope that we do not differ widely.

"You see I have met you in your own spirit of frankness, and I would be glad to have your views on these points, that I may know what I am doing. We must have a full understanding on all points, and I regard the civil or political questions as inseparable from the military in this contest.

"It is unnecessary for me to repeat my objections to the idea of withdrawing this army from its present position. Every day's reflection but serves to strengthen my conviction that the true policy is to re-enforce this army at the earliest possible moment by every available man and to allow it to resume the offensive with the least possible delay.

"I am, general, your sincere friend,

"GEO. B. McCLELLAN." [11]

No unbiased mind can reflect upon the contents of that letter without being impressed with the elevated character and splendid ability of the writer. It is a statesmanlike production of high merit. When Malvern Hill was reoccupied General Sumner sent the following letter to a friend in Washington:

"CAMP ON JAMES RIVER,
"August 5, 1862.

"GENERAL JOHN COCHRANE,
"Washington, D. C.:

"We have retaken Malvern Hill today, and from the way I am told the enemy behaved, I am convinced that if we had a re-enforcement of 20,000 men we could walk straight into Richmond. Do represent this in the right quarter.

"E. V. SUMNER,
"Brevet Major-General, U. S. Army.

"Approved.

"R. B. MARCY,
"Chief of Staff." [12]

[11] *Official Record*, XI, III, 345, 346.
[12] *Ibid.*, 356.

On the same day, in a letter to General Halleck, McClellan said: "This is a very advantageous position to cover an advance on Richmond, only fourteen and three-quarter miles distant, and I feel confident that with re-enforcements I could march this army there in five days." [13]

The curt and plainly untrue reply was doubtless sent through Halleck rather than by him.

"WAR DEPARTMENT,
"WASHINGTON CITY, August 5, 1862.
"MAJOR-GENERAL McCLELLAN, Berkeley:
"I have no re-enforcements to send you.
"H. W. HALLECK,
"General-in-Chief." [14]

McClellan surmised the situation at Washington and the probable fate of the army long before this, as a few extracts from his letters to his wife will show:

He wrote on July the 10th, "I do not know what paltry trick the administration will play next";[15] on July the 13th, "I have no faith in the administration";[16] on July the 17th: "You need not be at all alarmed as to my being deceived by them. I know that they are ready to sacrifice me at any moment. I shall not be at all surprised to have some other general made commander of the whole army, or even to be superseded here." [17] On July the 18th he wrote, "I am inclined now to think that the President will make Halleck commander of the army, and that the first pretext will be seized to supersede me in command of this army." [18]

Certainly he had the gift of prophecy, for both of the events he predicted, to the great sorrow of the country, came to pass. On July the 19th he wrote to a friend in New York to look up a situation for him, and on the 23d he wrote:

[13] *Official Record*, I, 78.
[14] *Ibid.*, XI, III, 359.
[15] McClellan, *Own Story*, 446.
[16] *Ibid.*, 447.
[17] *Ibid.*, 449.
[18] *Ibid.*, 450.

"There is now no doubt about Halleck being made commander in chief. The other change will, I feel sure, follow in a few days, perhaps a week." [19]

But when Halleck came on the 25th he was evidently filled with the true Stantonian inspiration, as he was so cordial in his concurrence with the commander's views that McClellan that same day wrote to his wife: "I think Halleck will support me and give me the means to take Richmond. . . . I am not to be relieved from the command of this army—at least that does not seem to be the present intention. . . ." [20]

A few days later he returned to his former belief, and on July the 30th informed Mrs. McClellan: "I have positive information to-day that the command of this army was pressed upon Burnside and that he peremptorily declined it. . . . I still think from all that comes to me, that the chances are at least that I will be superseded." [21]

Abundant time was taken to decide upon the proper response to the commander's letters of August the 1st, and when the reply came, it was cordial, conciliatory, and alluring.

"HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,
"WASHINGTON, August 7, 1862.

"MAJOR GENERAL McCLELLAN, Berkeley:

"MY DEAR GENERAL: Your private letter of the 1st instant was received a day or two ago, but I have been too busy to answer it sooner.

"If you still wish it, I will order Barnard here, but I cannot give you another engineer officer unless you take Benham, for you already have a larger proportion than any one else. I had, most of the time, out West only two, and you, with no larger force, have a dozen engineer officers.

"I fully agree with you in regard to the manner in which the war should be conducted, and I believe the present policy of the President to be conservative.

[19] *Ibid.*, 454.
[20] *Ibid.*, 455.
[21] *Ibid.*, 458.

"I think some of General Pope's orders very injudicious, and have so advised him; but as I understand they were shown to the President before they were issued I felt unwilling to ask him to countermand them. An oath of allegiance taken through force is not binding, and to put over the lines those who do not take it is only adding numbers to the rebel army. What he has made the general rule should be only the exception, and I have so advised him.

"I deeply regret that you cannot agree with me as to the necessity of reuniting the old Army of the Potomac. I, however, have taken the responsibility of doing so, and am to risk my reputation on it. As I told you when at your camp, it is my intention that you shall command all the troops in Virginia as soon as we can get them together; and with the army thus concentrated I am certain that you can take Richmond. I must beg of you, general, to hurry along this movement. Your reputation as well as mine may be involved in its rapid execution.

"I cannot regard Pope and Burnside as safe until you reenforce them. Moreover, I wish them to be under your immediate command for reasons which it is not necessary to specify. As things now are, with separate commands, there will be no concert of action, and we daily risk being attacked and defeated in detail. I would write you more fully, but nearly all my time is occupied with the new drafts and enlistments. They are doing well, but several weeks must elapse before we can get the troops into the field.

"Bragg seems to be concentrating a large force against Buell, and the latter is asking for re-enforcements. When he will reach Chattanooga is a problem I am unable to solve.

"Yours truly,

"H. W. HALLECK." [22]

It will be observed that this letter presents the President in a bad light,—as assenting to the barbarous orders of General Pope. Mr. Rhodes adverts to the same fact, almost with

[22] *Official Record*, XI, III, 359.

horror.[23] This incident does not disturb my view of Mr. Lincoln's naturally humane disposition. His retention of the orders for twenty-four hours is a redeeming feature. It shows his reluctance. But the whole matter leaves no doubt that the President was not a free agent; that he was in the hands of Stanton and his co-conspirators. It will also be observed in the letter that General Halleck assumes the whole responsibility of the removal of the army, as if the project had been conceived by himself. This is his first exercise of the function of scapegoat,—the sole purpose of his office. But no one is misled by it. Not a single writer gives any attention to this avowal or even refers to it. Where the mainspring of the removal lay was too well understood from the beginning. It was plainly intended that McClellan should understand that he was surely to have command of the united forces in Virginia. Every historian speaks of this as a promise,[24] but the letter expresses only an intention, a wish, which the Government might or might not comply with. The sequel proves incontestably that there was no thought of giving General McClellan such command, that the purpose was never seriously entertained, and that, on the contrary, the settled purpose of his loving friend Mr. Stanton was to get rid of him, after having used his military talent in safely carrying out the dangerous enterprise of withdrawing the army. So the letter was a bait, a lure held out to secure McClellan's assent to the contemplated movement. It implies a dread lest he might divine the purpose to destroy him, reveal it to his army, and defy the authorities. He did at least strongly suspect it, as his letters have told us; and undoubtedly only the religious element in his nature overcame the urgent temptation to resist.

In the hands of a Cromwell or a Napoleon the Army of the Potomac at this time would have been an imminent peril to Stanton and his plots. That such men would have resisted is certain.

[23] Rhodes, *History of the United States*, IV, 101.
[24] *Ibid.*, IV, 114.

CHAPTER LIV

THE SITUATION—A FIERCE TEMPTATION

There is no good in mincing words about the situation. The Army of the Potomac, both officers and men, with almost absolute unanimity, as well as the naval officers on the James and the commander at Fortress Monroe, felt that it was a patriotic duty to enlarge the army, and that nothing else was needed to end the war then and there.

On the other hand, the authorities, in disregarding their clear duty and in removing the army, were taking an action which was hostile to the safety of the union, and which was at once, and not without cogent reasons, stigmatized as traitorous. The reasons for the movement, as the Secretary of the Navy intimates, were political, not military. It was a means devised by Stanton to get rid of McClellan. General McMahon in his history of the campaign hints that the army understood this. If the 3,000 officers and over 60,000 men sacrificed in the march from Culpeper to Richmond two years later could have foreseen what the removal would bring upon them, nothing could have withheld them from revolt.

A word from McClellan would have sufficed. Cromwell would have spoken it. Napoleon would have spoken it. Either of the men whose bayonets cleared the legislative halls of England and of France would have torn the mask from the motives of the civilian conspirators, turned a strong light on their actions, and exposed to public view all their designs, showing how disastrous they were, that they would lead inevitably to incalculable sacrifice of treasure and of life, and that these conspirators were unfaithful to the nation's welfare.

And then what? I feel sure that General Grant, Mr. Stanton's co-secretary Gideon Welles, and myself,—as a jury of

three,—would have rendered a unanimous opinion as to the result of such resistant action,—namely, that Stanton would have abandoned his design. And each of us would have rested his conclusion upon the same basis,—namely, the supersensitive, incurable, and astounding timidity of the Secretary of War. Even as it was, with one so innocent of craft and guile as McClellan, Mr. Stanton was on the verge of panic from fright, lest the army would refuse to return, or, returning, would take control of the capital, and, viewing him as a more dangerous enemy to them and to the Union than even Robert E. Lee, would deal out summary justice to him. His false and deluding intimation through Halleck that McClellan would have supreme command of the united armies could mean nothing else. It would not have been necessary to march upon Washington nor to issue any blazon of defiance. The most delicate conveyance of the thought that the army felt that its safety required that it should be strengthened, that an attempted withdrawal would put it in extreme peril of destruction, that there was far less danger in advancing upon Richmond than in attempting to retire to Washington, that as soon as a third or a half of the army had set out the residue would be overwhelmed or escape only with great loss of life, that it was for this the main body of the rebels had been for more than a month and were yet remaining quiet at Richmond, and finally that the rebels flushed with their success against the retreating army, would rout Pope and his insufficient reinforcements and capture the national capital, would have been amply sufficient. I can imagine Cromwell bluntly refusing to join in such treachery to the nation's welfare and affirming it to be his duty to his country to deal sternly with all traitors equally, whether masked or open; and I can imagine Napoleon suavely inoculating "the grim Secretary" with a more terrible panic than that which Stonewall Jackson had given him, by the adroit suggestion that it would be highly inexpedient to bring the army into the vicinity of Washington, because of its recognition of its own strength, because of its intense feeling that its losses were mainly due to the hostile attitude of the Government in taking

away one-third of its strength at the outset and in failing to give it earnest support later, and above all, because of the fact that the Government, regardless of their lives, now purposed that they should drench the soil of Virginia all the way from Washington to Richmond with their blood in order to regain what the Government was about to throw away.

The result of such an attitude cannot be open to serious question. The doughty Secretary, with the dagger in his vest, would have sought the approval of such a commander more sedulously than ever suitor wooed the darling of his heart, and it would have been interesting to see how swiftly reinforcements would have come from those who had told McClellan they had none to send him.

What convinces me, above all, is the ingratiating tone of Mr. Stanton's letters of July the 5th, at a time when, as is now recognized by every thoughtful student of that period, his hatred of the General was intense and bitter. Keeping that virulent enmity in mind, no one, unless under the spell, can critically read those letters without concluding that the heart of the Secretary was far more responsive to fear than to love, and that the lightest intimation of possible peril to himself, if the army should not be heartily supported, would have made him an eager and compliant supporter of the commander,—an attentive and submissive vassal. Taken with their actual settings, the letters can bear no other import.

On July the 30th General Halleck communicated to McClellan a rumor that the rebels were retiring southward and that the force in Richmond was very small; and he suggested that the enemy be pressed in order to ascertain the facts. A similar dispatch was sent on the 31st. They both reached Harrison's Landing on the 1st of August. On the 3d McClellan drove the rebels from Coggins Point, on the North bank of the James. On the 2d a movement had been started to reoccupy Malvern Hill, but from want of knowledge of the roads it was deferred. On the 4th this design was carried out by General Hooker, as we have stated.

On the 4th came the prime iniquity of the war: the order for the withdrawal of the army,—dated August 3, 1862, 7:45

P. M. The vital part of that order is this: "It is determined to withdraw your army from the Peninsula to Acquia Creek. You will take immediate measures to effect this, covering the movement the best you can." [1]

McClellan's telegram in response to this is so splendid, forceful, and patriotic as to compel the applause even of his enemies.[2]

"HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
"BERKELEY, Aug. 4, 1862,—12 M.

"Your telegram of last evening is received. I must confess that it has caused me the greatest pain I ever experienced, for I am convinced that the order to withdraw this army to Acquia Creek will prove disastrous to our cause. I fear it will be a fatal blow. Several days are necessary to complete the preparations for so important a movement as this, and while they are in progress I beg that careful consideration may be given to my statements.

"This army is now in excellent discipline and condition. We hold a debouche on both banks of the James River, so that we are free to act in any direction; and with the assistance of the gunboats I consider our communications as now secure.

"We are 25 miles from Richmond, and are not likely to meet the enemy in force sufficient to fight a battle until we have marched 15 to 18 miles, which brings us practically within 10 miles of Richmond. Our longest line of land transportation would be from this point 25 miles, but with the aid of the gunboats we can supply the army by water during its advance certainly to within 12 miles of Richmond. At Acquia Creek we would be 75 miles from Richmond, with land transportation all the way.

"From here to Fort Monroe is a march of about 70 miles, for I regard it as impracticable to withdraw this army and its material except by land.

"The result of the movement would thus be a march of

[1] *Official Record*, XI, 1, 80.
[2] *Ibid.*, 81, 82.

145 miles to reach a point now only 25 miles distant, and to deprive ourselves entirely of the powerful aid of the gunboats and water transportation. Add to this the certain demoralization of this army which would ensue, the terribly depressing effect upon the people of the North, and the strong probability that it would influence foreign powers to recognize our adversaries, and these appear to me sufficient reasons to make it my imperative duty to urge in the strongest terms afforded by our language that this order may be rescinded, and that far from recalling this army, it may be promptly reinforced to enable it to resume the offensive.

"It may be said that there are no reinforcements available. I point to Burnside's force; to that of Pope, not necessary to maintain a strict defensive in front of Washington and Harper's Ferry; to those portions of the Army of the West not required for a strict defensive there. Here, directly in front of this army, is the heart of the rebellion. It is here that all our resources should be collected to strike the blow which will determine the fate of the nation. All points of secondary importance elsewhere should be abandoned, and every available man brought here; a decided victory here and the military strength of the rebellion is crushed. It matters not what partial reverses we may meet with elsewhere. Here is the true defense of Washington. It is here, on the banks of the James, that the fate of the Union should be decided.

"Clear in my convictions of right, strong in the consciousness that I have ever been, and still am, actuated solely by the love of my country, knowing that no ambitious or selfish motives have influenced me from the commencement of this war, I do now what I never did in my life before, I entreat that this order be rescinded.

"If my counsel does not prevail, I will with a sad heart obey your orders to the utmost of my power, directing to the movement, which I clearly foresee will be one of the utmost delicacy and difficulty, whatever skill I may possess. Whatever the result may be—and may God grant that I am mistaken in my forebodings—I shall at least have the internal satisfaction that I have written and spoken frankly, and have

sought to do the best in my power to avert disaster from my country.

"GEO. B. MCCLELLAN,
"Major-General Commanding.

"MAJ.-GEN. H. W. HALLECK,
"Commanding U. S. Army."

This appeal reflects the highest credit upon its author, and proves that with his apt diction and vivid manner of presentation he would have won fame as a public speaker, if he had devoted attention to the art of oratory. The following passages are forceful and eloquent: "It may be said that there are no reinforcements available. I point to Burnside's force; to that of Pope, not necessary to maintain a strict defensive in front of Washington and Harper's Ferry; to those portions of the Army of the West not required for a strict defensive there. Here, directly in front of this army, is the heart of the rebellion. It is here that all our resources should be collected to strike the blow which will determine the fate of the nation. All points of secondary importance elsewhere should be abandoned, and every available man brought here; a decided victory here and the military strength of the rebellion is crushed. It matters not what partial reverses we may meet with elsewhere. Here is the true defense of Washington. It is here, on the banks of the James, that the fate of the Union should be decided."

When he learned of the order of withdrawal it is said that General Hooker urged McClellan to disregard it and to push on to Richmond from Malvern Hill. On August the 11th the following letter was sent to the commander, and it shows clearly the spirit of the army.[8]

"HAXALL'S, August 11, 1862.

"GENERAL R. B. MARCY,
"Chief of Staff:

"GENERAL: Your note of this date received. There are moments when the most decided action is necessary to save us from great disasters. I think such a moment has arrived.

[8] *Official Record*, XI, III, 369.

"The enemy before us is weak. A crushing blow by this army at this time would be invaluable to disconcert the troops of the enemy to the north of us. That blow can be made in forty-eight hours. Two corps would do it, and be in position to go wherever else they may be ordered by that time.

"From all I can learn there are not 36,000 men between this and Richmond, nor do I believe they [can] get more before we can whip them. I have guides ready, and know the roads sufficiently well to accomplish anything the general wants.

"I write this as a friend. I shall willingly carry out the general's orders, be they what they may, but I think he has an opportunity at this time few men ever attain.

"Destroy this, and whatever I have said shall not be repeated by me.

"Very truly yours,
"A. PLEASONTON."

On receipt of this letter, the Commander, being heartily in accord with General Pleasonton's views, hurried the following message to the General-in-Chief:[4]

"BERKELEY, VA., August 12, 1862—4 P. M.
(Received 11:8 P. M.)

"MAJ.-GEN. H. W. HALLECK:

"Information from various sources received within a few days past goes to corroborate the evidence you have received that the rebel army at Richmond has been much weakened by detachment sent to Gordonsville, and that the remaining forces have been so much dispersed between Richmond and this place on both sides of the James River as to render it doubtful if they can be concentrated again rapidly. D. H. Hill, with a division or more, is in the vicinity of Petersburg; others are along the south bank of James River back of Fort Darling, and I am quite certain that Longstreet, with about 18,000 men, now occupies an intrenched position, which can probably be turned, and is about 3 miles above Malvern Hill. I can in for-

[4] *Official Record*, XI, III, 372.

ty-eight hours advance on him and either drive him into the works around Richmond or defeat and capture his force. Should I succeed in accomplishing the latter I see but little difficulty, if my information prove correct, in pushing rapidly forward into Richmond.

"GEO. B. McCLELLAN,
"Major-General."

No notice was taken, it seems, of this suggestion. If the permission had been granted, the second battle of Bull Run would never have taken place, for it is now asserted that there were actually only 20,000 men in the vicinity of Richmond at that time; and the city would have been captured probably before Jackson could return.

The order of withdrawal was made, and there was evidently great anxiety at Washington to know if it would be executed; the time no doubt went on leaden feet, as it seemed to Mr. Stanton. For a while there was frequent goading, censuring, and menacing from Mr. Stanton's mouthpiece, and there were also explanations and remonstrances from McClellan.

On August the 9th Halleck telegraphed: "Considering the amount of transportation at your disposal, your delay is not satisfactory. You must move with all possible celerity." [5]

On the 10th he says: "The enemy is crossing the Rapidan in large force. They are fighting General Pope to-day; there must be no further delay in your movement. That which has already occurred was entirely unexpected and must be satisfactorily explained. Let not a moment's time be lost, and telegraph me daily what progress you have made in executing the order to transfer your troops." [6]

On the other hand we may well surmise that, to the Secretary's intense relief and delight, McClellan's replies were mild expostulations and explanations. They negatived all thought of resistance. This course mollified his superiors to some extent,

[5] *Ibid.*, 85.
[6] McClellan, *Own Story*, 501.

and on August the 12th a milder letter was sent to him. On the same day McClellan sent further explanations, but added:

"If Washington is in danger now, this army can scarcely arrive in time to save it; it is in much better position to do so from here than from Acquia."

In order to make a final appeal, McClellan went on August 13th 70 miles to Jamestown Island, and not succeeding in communicating with Halleck, went on to Cherry Stone Inlet, opposite Fortress Monroe. From there he sent a despatch asking General Halleck to come to the office to confer with him. No answer came, and an hour later he sent a second message. At 1:40 A. M. of the 14th came the following telegram:[1] "1:40 A. M.—I have read your despatches. There is no change of plans. You will send up your troops as rapidly as possible. There is no difficulty in landing them. According to your own accounts, there is now no difficulty in withdrawing your forces. Do so with all possible rapidity.

"H. W. HALLECK,
"Major-General."

The main purpose of McClellan's long trip was lost, for the general-in-chief left the office at once after sending the despatch and so made the desired conference impossible. The struggle was over.

"Attention has been so frequently directed to McClellan's alleged failure to seize the supreme opportunity that it is a matter of ordinary fairness to observe that the plan presented by him was the most promising strategy of this whole campaign both for security to Washington and for positive results. On the 14th of August there were in Richmond and the neighborhood 30,000 troops at the outside; and the bulk of the Army of Northern Virginia was in Gordonsville in its vicinity. It was on this very day that McClellan tried to have a telegraphic connection with Halleck, when he intended to beg for permission to throw his 81,000 soldiers upon Richmond. Himself thirsting to retrieve his failing fortunes by a

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 504.

plan of his own, his men and most of his officers devoted to him, Sumner and Hooker full of the purpose and eager to fight, Franklin and Porter bound to him by hoops of steel, it is not improbable that he would have taken Richmond and held it, the gunboats maintaining communication until the whole energy of the Government had been turned to his support. . . . But Halleck would consent to no alteration of his plan." [8]

[8] Rhodes, *History of the United States,* IV, 117.

CHAPTER LV

VIEWS OF THE ENEMY AND OTHERS

Miss Johnston, the brilliant Southern novelist-historian, in *The Long Roll* has given a vivid picture of this period of the war in Virginia and of the acts and thoughts of the people in Richmond at that time. She tells us that "McClellan claimed quite rightly that here and now, with his army on both sides of the James, he held the key-position, and that with sufficient reinforcements he could force the evacuation of Richmond," and she also tells us, with equal sureness, that "the desire of the moment most at the heart of Robert E. Lee was that General McClellan should be recalled." [1] Mr. Eggleston, the latest Southern historian, corroborates this by stating that Lee at that time sought to put Washington in fear, so that McClellan would be withdrawn,[2] and also that Lee sent reinforcements to Jackson as rapidly as McClellan's withdrawal rendered it prudent for him to deplete the army that was defending Richmond.

The most ardent Southerner of them all, Mr. Pollard, bears evidence that "the main part of General Lee's army waited at Richmond the development of McClellan's intentions." [3]

But we need not rest our conclusions upon the Southern historians. We have the satisfaction of hearing from General Lee directly. On August the 14th he writes to Gen. G. W. Smith: "Should you be able to ascertain whether General McClellan is diminishing his force at his present position, please let me know, and to what point they are being sent. It may be necessary in that event to reduce our own force correspondingly or to withdraw it entirely. I wish you to keep this contingency constantly in view. Generals D. H. Hill and Hampton have instructions to keep out scouts and

[1] *The Long Roll*, 446.
[2] *History of the Confederate War*, I, 416.
[3] *The Lost Cause*, 302.

to use every means in their power to ascertain General McClellan's movements. Lieut.-Col. E. R. Alexander has undertaken measures to the same end." [4] A similar letter was sent to General D. H. Hill on August the 13th.

Mr. Swinton pointedly remarks: "Now it is a curious circumstance that at this time there was another person fully as anxious as General Halleck to have the Army of the Potomac leave the Peninsula. That person was General Lee." [5]

"The misguided advisers of the President and the Confederate commander were aiming at the same object." [6]

"All the successes and sacrifices of the army were now to be worse than lost. They were to be thrown away by the withdrawal of the army from the Peninsula instead of reinforcing it." [7]

General Dodge puts the matter with equal cogency.[8]

Long after, heartsick over the Administration's methods and also over the dwindling away of the army, from desertions even more than from battle, Generals Franklin and Smith, on December the 21st, 1862, felt bound to write a letter to the President urging again the coast route. Probably this reindorsement of the coast route, and impliedly of McClellan, was a factor in the removal of these generals in January, 1863.

This was only McClellan's plan over again,—a colossal force, concentration, and getting close to Richmond without loss of strength. And the answer signed by the President, but doubtless emanating from Stanton, is the answer of the timid hearts again; and the pith of it is as follows: "But now, as heretofore, if you go to the James River, a large part of the army must remain on or near the Fredericksburg line to protect Washington. It is the old difficulty."

The demonstration of the advantages of the James came almost three years later when, after a frightful waste of life and money, the army of General Grant established itself there and there gave a quietus to the rebellion.

[4] *Official Record*, II, III, 677.
[5] *Army of the Potomac*, 171.
[6] Upton, *Military Policies of the United States*, 371.
[7] General Averill, *Battles and Leaders*, II, 433.
[8] *Bird's-Eye View of the Civil War*, 70.

Whether an act so detrimental to the Union cause sprang solely from timidity or partly from fear of McClellan's acquiring too great a prestige, or from a mingling of both, is a question which need not now detain the reader. To fix the exact responsibility of Mr. Stanton, and of those whom he persuaded or coerced into compliance with his desires, is not the object of this book. My purpose is to make it clear that if he had not been torn away from his campaign there is no reason to doubt that the war would have been swiftly ended by McClellan.

The withdrawal of the Army of the Potomac was a surrender to the Confederates of the most valuable position in the whole domain of war; but it was still worse in its operation in that it interrupted a campaign and needlessly forced it to a close when it was only midway in its progress, with every prospect of full success directly before it. It has been the fashion, even with General McClellan's friends, to say that the campaign was a failure. It was not a failure. It was fruitless: it had gained nothing for the Union, *not* because it had failed, but because the Army of the Potomac was compelled to desist, just when it was most eager to continue, and surest of success. In other words, it was prevented from doing what it could have done, which is a very different thing from failure. A workman set to do a task, but called away before it is quite finished to do something else which his employer deems more pressing, has not failed. He has merely been prevented from finishing his job. Stanton, we may assume, started the report that the campaign had failed; but why should anyone else accept that absurd and illogical idea? The army was midway in its campaign. It was flushed with hope and confident of success; and the belief is now practically universal that it needed only the cordial support of the Government to crown the campaign with a glorious victory. General Upton emphasizes the point that the campaign had not failed,[9] "40,000 men could have been given to McClellan at once and 100,000 a month later."[10]

[9] *Military Policy of the United States*, 324.
[10] *Ibid.*, 323.

The crafty device of dubbing the campaign a failure was conceived to divert the blame from those to whom it belonged, and to destroy a supposedly dangerous political rival.

We have seen the noble struggle which McClellan made to remain, for the good of the country and the glory of the army; yet I am sure that in spite of it all a very common idea disseminated by the wily Secretary of War was, not that the army which was like a hound tugging at the leash had been dragged away from its work when it was feverishly eager to pursue it, but that the army had failed. Stanton tried to create the impression that McClellan had failed and was someway in disgrace; and that the army, not being of the slightest use where it was, had been brought back to defend the National capital, which many suppose was in danger of attack by the whole force of the Confederacy.

If there had been the slightest good faith in the assurance that McClellan on his return would command all the Federal armies in Virginia, he should have been given that command before a soldier moved from the James. There would then in all probability have been no Bull Run No. 2, for General McClellan would have taken prudent measures to ensure the union of the armies, before a general engagement could take place.

As it was, General Pope was left to his own devices and was quickly confronted with greatly superior numbers as well as greatly superior military ability, for as rapidly as the Army of the Potomac set out from the James just so rapidly did General Lee swell the rebel forces in front of Pope; and he soon hurried to the field in person.

If General Lee had chosen to harass the withdrawing army, there would have been great difficulty in the retreat and the safety of the army would have been imperiled; but, having a choice of adversaries, he chose Pope. [11] The greater part of the sick having been already forwarded, two corps of the army were started off, one on the 14th and the other on the 15th of August, and the rest followed promptly. General Porter led the van, and reached Williamsburg on the 16th. Here he was to wait until the whole army had gathered there;

[11] Rhodes, *History of the United States*, IV, 115, 116.

but from the chance capture of a rebel letter he learned that Pope was in danger, and on his own responsibility he hastened on to Newport News and took the first transports for Acquia Creek. The other corps were shipped from Yorktown, Fortress Monroe, and Newport News as fast as they could be embarked.

Having carefully supervised the whole movement, General McClellan himself left the Peninsula on the evening of August 23d and landed at Acquia at daylight on the 24th. The infamy was complete. The act of virtual treason was consummated. Richmond and the cause of the Confederacy were delivered from imminent peril, and now Washington and the Union were in danger. But the wings of a dangerous political rival had been clipped, and the glory which would have come to him from a swift and brilliant extinction of the rebellion had been wrested from him. General Upton says: "On August 3d at 7:45 P. M. Halleck sent the fatal despatch which to the joy of the Confederates relieved them of all immediate anxiety as to the safety of their capital." [12] "There is every reason to believe that he was but carrying out a program suggested by the Secretary of War." [13] The civilians at Washington, who were at the same time the supreme military authorities, had backed the army away from the redoubts of Richmond and from its secure base on the James, forcing it to fight its way back again during three years of fierce struggle, dyeing the red soil of Virginia to a deeper crimson every foot of the way, at the cost altogether of more than 600,000 lives.

[12] *Military Policy of the United States*, 324.
[13] *Ibid.*, 326.

CHAPTER LVI

A CRAFTY SCHEME—HOW THE PROMISE WAS KEPT—DESPOILED OF HIS ARMY—POPE'S CAMPAIGN—M'CLELLAN'S TORTURE

Immediately on his arrival at Acquia, General McClellan reported to Halleck for orders, and also indicated his desire to know if the promise to put him in command was to be kept.

"On the evening of Aug. 23, I sailed with my staff for Acquia Creek, where I arrived at daylight on the following morning, reporting to General Halleck as follows: 'Acquia Creek, Aug. 24, 1862.—I have reached here, and respectfully report for orders.' . . . I also telegraphed as follows to General Halleck: 'Morell's scouts report Rappahannock Station burned and abandoned by Pope without any notice to Morell or Sykes. This was telegraphed you some hours ago. Reynolds, Reno, and Stevens are supposed to be with Pope, as nothing can be heard of them to-day. Morell and Sykes are near Morrisville Postoffice, watching the lower fords of the Rappahannock, with no troops between there and Rappahannock Station, which is reported abandoned by Pope. Please inform me immediately exactly where Pope is and what doing; until I know that, I cannot regulate Porter's movements. He is much exposed now, and decided measures should be taken at once. Until I know what my command and my position are to be, and whether you still intend to place me in the command indicated in your first letter to me, and orally through General Burnside at the Chickahominy, I cannot decide where I can be of most use. If your determination is unchanged, I ought to go to Alexandria at once. Please define my position and duties.' " [1]

The reply ignores the most vital point,—the command:

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 508.

"Aug. 24.—You ask me for information which I cannot give. I do not know where either General Pope is or where the enemy in force is. These are matters which I have all day been most anxious to ascertain." [2]

On the 26th General Halleck directed him to go to Alexandria, but said nothing of the command. McClellan went to Alexandria at once, and on the following day was ordered to "take entire direction of the sending out of the troops from Alexandria." [3] Here was the commander of the Army of the Potomac reduced and degraded to the petty function of forwarding troops, and in command of nothing.

Such was the fulfilment of the promise that he should have the command of the united armies. On the 27th McClellan again made an effort to get an answer from Halleck. "Please inform me at once what my position is. I do not wish to act in the dark." The reply was—silence. On the 29th the President's anxiety caused him to despatch and enquire for news directly of McClellan, and after answering the inquiry and making certain suggestions the General seized the opportunity to say: "Tell me what you wish me to do, and I will do all in my power to accomplish it. I wish to know what my orders and authority are. I ask for nothing, but will obey whatever orders you will give. I only ask a prompt decision, that I may at once give the necessary orders. It will not do to delay longer." [4] But the President thought it *would* do, and did not deem that the appeal demanded the civility even of notice. Like General Halleck, he forgot to refer to it. Surely, the man who drew upon himself this almost brutal discourtesy of his superiors, must have been guilty of some unspeakable enormity. The manner of meeting the appeal was so perfectly identical in both instances as to indicate the same governing mind,—that of Stanton. His design clearly was to humiliate McClellan as far as possible by forcing him to discharge almost menial services while Pope was commanding the united armies and, as the Secretary believed, winning a glorious and decisive

[2] McClellan, *Own Story*, 508.
[3] *Ibid.*, 95.
[4] *Ibid.*, 98.

victory, which would prove to the nation that there was no further need for McClellan. As rapidly as they arrived from the Peninsula, the various corps of the Army of the Potomac hastened forward to General Pope. Porter and Heintzelman were the first to join him, about August 22d and 23d. Franklin reached Acquia on the 23d, Sumner on the 27th. The troops of Franklin and Sumner were first to be retained for the defense of Washington, but later, August the 29th, Franklin was sent on, and on the next morning Sumner followed. McClellan exhorted Franklin to uphold the honor of the Army of the Potomac, and Franklin vehemently assured McClellan that he would do so.

On August the 30th McClellan's command was fixed by the following paragraph in an order from the Secretary of War: "General McClellan commands that portion of the Army of the Potomac that has not been sent forward to General Pope's command." [5] The grim sarcasm of this order is manifest only after reading the despatch sent to the General-in-Chief by McClellan at an earlier hour on the same day in which he said: "You now have every man of the Army of the Potomac who is within my reach." In other words, to McClellan this facetious order meant: "You are to command —nothing."

Meantime, let us see what was happening at the front. On the 9th of August the Union forces of Northern Virginia, shrunk in some amazing way from 80,000 or more to 50,000, was at Culpeper under General Pope. Finding from his "Information Bureau" that the removal of McClellan was irrevocably fixed upon, General Lee sent Gen. A. P. Hill to the aid of Jackson to attack Pope. Banks met him with such vigor and gallantry at Cedar Mountain that, though he had but 10,000 against 25,000, Jackson retired across the Rapidan. A period of calm followed, until the actual withdrawal of the army from the James made it safe further to reduce Lee's army and to enlarge that of Jackson. Accordingly, all the Army of the Potomac being at Fortress Monroe or close to it, on August 20th Longstreet had been added to Jackson.

[5] *Ibid.*, 103.

Wiser than his vaunting words on taking command, which implied that he could never retreat, General Pope withdrew to the northeast bank of the Rappahannock. We are told that one-third of the Army of the Potomac was marching to meet him. It seems obvious that he should have continued to retire until the full expected strength of his army had been gained. Lee, who had now come in person, did not try to force the passage of the river, but sent Jackson on a long detour to the northwest to cross the river higher up, pass through Thoroughfare Gap, destroy Pope's communications, and fall upon his rear. General Pope learned of the departure of Jackson and formed the bold plan of attacking Lee while his adventurous lieutenant was away; but a flood saved him from this measure of rashness. About this time Stuart's cavalry made a daring raid on Catlett, captured General Pope's papers, made the few camp attachés feel that the whole rebel army was upon them, and threw the gentle head of the War Department almost into a spasm of panic. The swift Jackson was held inactive at Waterloo. All this was most providential, if General Pope could have so seen it, as it gave him abundant opportunity to march toward the forces advancing to his support, thus hastening the union, shortening his line of communication, and bringing himself, if necessary, within the ægis of the river fleet,—the terror of Rebeldom. But he had no thought of this kind. Learning of Jackson's further movement, he again thought of crossing the river and attacking Lee.

Jackson crossed at Waterloo early on the 25th, marched fifty miles in thirty-six hours, and before the 26th ended was wrecking the supplies and munitions of war of the Union army at Bristoe and Manassas. Pope was dazed; Washington, in a frenzy of dread.

Franklin, who was now at Alexandria, sent out a brigade to Bull Run; but finding Jackson's force too great to contend with, this force retired to Centreville. Longstreet pursued Jackson's circuitous path to reinforce him. On the 28th, McDowell occupied Gainesville and Haymarket. This planted him between Longstreet and Jackson, and he wished to advance

upon Jackson. He had Jackson in a trap, but General Pope set Jackson free again by withdrawing McDowell to Manassas, thus throwing away a great opportunity. However, the possibility of retiring beyond Bull Run until all his troops should come up was still open to him.

He now rashly concluded to regain the advantage seized by McDowell and released by himself. Pope imagined that he had only Jackson to meet, but Longstreet was there and formed the rebel right wing. This was the battle of Groveton. The Federal army acquitted itself with credit, but the foe was not driven away; and as the army was now out of supplies General Pope should at last have retired. It is reckless to wage warfare with hungry soldiers. Pope could have avoided it, but he did not. He resumed the attack on the 30th, only to be driven back at every point. This was the second battle of Bull Run and came very near being a fatal defeat. Pope now withdrew to Centreville, where a second fatality menaced him, for the nimble Jackson would have intercepted his retreat to Fairfax, had not the pluck of Reno and Kearney balked the intent. In these last operations some days were spent. The fight of Chantilly was on September 2d. The result of it all was a speedy and, as a veracious officer of the Southern army who saw it described it to me, a very panicky retreat of the Union army within the defenses of Washington. The Army of the Potomac was now flying from the same enemy into which it had set its fangs so deeply a few weeks before along the Chickahominy and at Malvern Hill.

On the morning of the 30th McClellan heard the heavy firing at the second battle of Bull Run, and the emotions it awakened in this patriotic officer may be easily conjectured. Late that night the following telegram was despatched to the general-in-chief: "I cannot express to you the pain and mortification I have experienced to-day in listening to the distant sound of the firing of my men. As I can be of no further use here, I respectfully ask that, if there is a probability of the conflict being renewed to-morrow, I may be permitted to go to the scene of the battle with my staff, merely

to be with my own men, if nothing more. They will fight none the worse for my being with them. If it is not deemed best to entrust me with the command of my own army, I simply ask to be permitted to share their fate on the field of battle. Please reply to this to-night."

To this feeling request General Halleck replied the next morning in effect that he must consult the President. There was never any further reply. As the President expressed it later, with more force than feeling, McClellan was left, without men or orders, *"gnawing a file."* This was a critical period in which the cause of the Union needed all its friends. Yet here was a general who had just met Lee, with honor to the nation, and who was pleading to meet him again,—pleading in vain. He was "gnawing a file." That the Army of the Potomac loved him beyond all other men was recognized, and from this the natural inference flows that they would do more for him than for any other man. The soldiers loved him not merely because of his kind and thoughtful care of them, but equally because of their confidence in his military genius. They felt that though they might be hurt, the enemy would be hurt still more. It is probable that it was because of these very considerations that he was not sent.

In a fierce struggle for national existence, and with such a potent agency to promote the country's cause at hand, was there no responsibility upon the part of those who stubbornly refused to use it? And, above all, if as the result come national disgrace, panic, and the needless slaughter of tens of thousands of men, is there no moral liability for that?

On the 30th of August the general wrote to his wife: "1:30 P. M.—There has been heavy firing going on all day somewhere beyond Bull Run. . . . It is dreadful to listen to this cannonading and not be able to take any part. . . . But such is my fate. . . . 9:15 P. M.—I have been listening to the sound of a great battle in the distance. My men engaged in it and I away! I never felt worse in my life. . . . 10:45—I feel in that state of excitement and anxiety that I can hardly keep still for a moment. I learn from Ham-

merstein that the men in front are all anxious for me to be with them. It is too cruel." [6]

But McClellan was not merely prevented from joining his troops and doing what he could for the cause of the Union, left chafing and fretting to be in the fight,—left to "gnaw a file," as Mr. Lincoln said,—but, in spite of all the abundant proof of his eagerness to be on the field and share the fate of his men, he was charged with desiring and conniving at Pope's defeat,—a defeat which would of necessity mean great harm to his beloved Army of the Potomac.

Mr. Rhodes,—who is honest but greatly, though unconsciously, biased because of his faith in Mr. Stanton, and who therefore sees only something to regret when he comes upon an indefensible matter like the Sherman incident,—is convinced by McClellan's parting words to Franklin, when he set out to join Pope, that McClellan patriotically and earnestly desired the success of the Union army.

The non-partisan student seeking only the truth will see in the honest pages of General Upton's official document, though he was "an abolitionist and the son of an abolitionist," the secret of the strange conditions frequently existing during these periods of mediæval plots. He will see that the political motto on which Mr. Stanton relied to destroy McClellan was: "Prevent and blame." Cripple him beyond any possibility of success; represent through the press that he had every element of victory, and then berate him indignantly for not securing the results which had been rendered impossible,—that was Stanton's plan. So it was that McClellan was marooned at Fortress Monroe, a third of his army detained, the supreme command taken away from him, the indispensable naval aid withheld, and then he was chided and urged on by those who caused the delay; so it was that he was kept waiting for six weeks for the repeatedly promised coming of McDowell and then told that he must take Richmond alone without McDowell, or give up the job. And having made the taking of Richmond impracticable, the War Department circulated the report throughout the North that Richmond would be cap-

[6] McClellan, *Own Story*, 531.

tured before the 4th of July, and many papers got ready to celebrate the end of the Rebellion. Thus it was that when McClellan asked for 30,000 men to strengthen his army on the James, he was told that only 20,000 could be furnished; although, as General Upton says, 40,000 could have been supplied at once and 100,000 within a month. But the army was withdrawn and the campaign dubbed a failure; so it was at Alexandria, when he was stripped of every man of his army and yet upbraided for not aiding Pope; and so it was at Harper's Ferry after Antietam, when indispensable supplies and equipments were withheld and McClellan blamed for the delay by those who caused it. Speaking of the political peril which Stanton saw in McClellan's military prestige, General Upton writes: "It is not surprising if the Administration determined to remove him, but to accomplish this openly was impossible. He had extricated his army from a position which, in the calculations of the Confederates, doomed it to destruction. To have removed him under such circumstances would have been a shock to the country. There was but one way to get rid of him and that was to disintegrate his army." [7] This was done by leaving him alone "to gnaw a file" at Alexandria. It will be observed that on various occasions during his war career irritating, fault-finding letters were sent to McClellan. Stanton always had the President or Halleck send them. His own letters were letters of admiration and love! It will be noted by the careful investigator that every such occasion was an occasion where the Administration was doing him, and through him the country, a gross injury; such as when he was left stranded and hopelessly crippled at Fortress Monroe; when he was kept waiting for McDowell; when his army was being removed from the James; when he was despoiled of every soldier at Alexandria; and when he was waiting for supplies at Harper's Ferry. At all these times he was made to understand that his conduct was highly unsatisfactory.

[7] *Military Policy of the United States*, 319.

CHAPTER LVII

THE DISCOMFITURE OF STANTON

On August the 31st General Halleck repeated to McClellan the farcical order of the War Department, adding: "I beg of you to assist me in this crisis with your ability and experience. I am entirely tired out."

On the same night McClellan telegraphed in rejoinder: "I am ready to afford you any assistance in my power, but you will readily perceive how difficult an undefined position such as I now hold must be. At what hour in the morning can I see you alone at your own house or the office?" This too was met with utter and contemptuous silence. Despite this treatment, in the hope of saving the army as far as possible, McClellan near midnight wired to the general-in-chief many wise suggestions and precautions based upon his information that Pope was already defeated and the army in danger even of annihilation. But the War Department seeking to conceal its own chagrin, asserted at 1:30 A. M. through Halleck, that from news received at 4 P. M. Pope was then all right.

On the same day, September the 1st, General McClellan was called to the office of the general-in-chief and put in command of the city, but distinctly forbidden to interfere with General Pope's army. Halleck still professed to believe that Pope was secure. McClellan urged him to go and learn for himself and if necessary take command. He refused, but finally consented to have Colonel Kelton go and learn the actual state of affairs.

On the return of Colonel Kelton, he reported that there were 30,000 stragglers on the roads and that the army was falling back in confusion upon Washington.

Mr. Stanton's warmest eulogist tells us that, although terribly punished, Pope was nevertheless expected to win, and

it was Stanton's purpose to relieve McClellan and announce the fact to the country at the moment of victory.

The full meaning of this may not strike every reader instantly. It means in the first place that McClellan's humiliating position was due to Stanton, that he was kept from the scene of war that he might have no share in the glory of the expected victory. Not only was he to have no share in it, but he was to be charged with trying to prevent it. The splendor of the victory and McClellan's alleged effort to thwart it would make the public not only content but delighted with his removal. But the fates would not have it so. On the morning of the 30th Stanton brought to the War Office a petition "written in his own hand, in large outline on both sides of the sheet, with several erasures and interlineations." After it was copied, he persuaded Chase and Smith to sign it, together with himself. Welles refused to sign, and his opposition could not be overcome. It was an appeal, almost a demand, for the removal of McClellan.

Secretary Welles tells us in his Diary:

"Reflection had more fully satisfied me that this method of conspiring to influence or control the President was repugnant to my feelings and was not right." [1] "It was evident that there was a fixed *determination to remove and if possible to disgrace McClellan.* . . . It appears as if there was a combination by two to get their associates committed seriatim, by a skillful ex-parte movement without general consultation.[2] . . . The introduction of Pope here, followed by Halleck, is an intrigue of Stanton's and Chase's to get rid of McClellan. A part of this intrigue has been the withdrawal of McClellan and the Army of the Potomac from before Richmond and turning it into the Army of Washington under Pope." [3]

The partly signed petition was presented to the President in Stanton's private office, and he pondered over it almost the whole day, August the 30th. It would be pleasing to re-

[1] *Diary of Gideon Welles*, I, 101.
[2] *Ibid.*, 102.
[3] *Ibid.*, 108.

cord that his hesitation sprang from a well-founded fear of doing a great wrong; but it was not that. His fears were political fears only,—fears that a great uproar would arise. And so he thought that to leave McClellan at Alexandria without anything to do, with no men or orders, there "to gnaw a file," would prove the more judicious course. [4]

It was Stanton to whom Colonel Kelton first reported early on the morning of September the 1st. It was from Stanton that the President got the news. The plot was foiled; and hastening to the War Office Stanton gathered up the McClellan protests and the accompanying papers and suppressed them; and they were not revealed until all the chief actors were gone from the earth.[5] Too much significance cannot be given to this action. It was a confession. He was hiding the evidence of a conspiracy. The rout of Pope was a condemnation of the withdrawal of the army from the Peninsula. If Pope had won, all would have been lovely for Stanton's plans. But the defeat of Pope discredited Stanton, and his trembling heart dreaded a public outcry, for this calamity would be charged to him and rightly too, as Halleck and Pope were but the instruments of his hatred of McClellan.

Anger and fear contended for the mastery in Stanton's breast. His clerk says that he never saw him so enraged as when the news came, and that if McClellan had been there he believes Mr. Stanton would have assaulted him. What? Used the stiletto? That would have been dramatic indeed. But Mr. Stanton never assaulted anyone. The gentle and timid heart which beat beneath that rugged exterior forbade even the repelling of an assault, as we saw when he was attacked in court.

Soon terror overpowered every other emotion. Washington would be a rebel prize before another day was gone. So the valiant Secretary got ready for flight. General Maynadier was directed to move all military stores and supplies and to destroy what he could not move, Stanton gathered his office papers into bundles to be carried by men on foot or horseback,

[4] Flower, *Edwin McMasters Stanton*, 177.
[5] *Ibid.*, 178.

and arrangements were made to ship off the contents of the arsenal.

But he was not alone in his apprehensions. General Meigs narrates that Mr. Lincoln dropped into his room on his way to see Stanton, threw himself into a big chair, and, with a mingled groan and sigh, exclaimed: "Chase says we can't raise any more money; Pope is licked, and McClellan has the diarrhœa. What shall I do? The bottom is out of the tub, the bottom is out of the tub!" [6] This delicate allusion to General McClellan meant that he was presumptively resentful and sulky because of the galling treatment he had received from the Government. Pope had failed, thought Lincoln, and how could he now again turn to McClellan, who would probably decline to act.

[6] Flower's *Stanton*, 179.

CHAPTER LVIII

STANTON RESISTS IN VAIN—TWO DRAMATIC SCENES

On the 2d of September, 1862, there were two intensely dramatic scenes. After the events already described and while it was still early morning, the President and the general-in-chief, apparently without any prior conference with the Secretary of War, called at General McClellan's house.

The President recounted Colonel Kelton's report, and both he and Halleck repeatedly expressed their conviction that the city was surely lost. The President asked McClellan if he would under the circumstances, as a favor to him, resume command and do the best that could be done, specifying afterward that he wished him to collect the stragglers, put the works in a proper state of defense, and take command of the army when it came close to the city. On occasions like this, knowledge of the world and experience with men of politics are of almost infinite value, and there were probably ten thousand men in the United States any one of whom could have given General McClellan at this critical moment of his career very useful and much needed advice. Had he been properly advised, he would have recognized the fact that the President had come to him, not in penitence or remorse, for he made no apology and expressed no regret, but perforce and reluctantly, in the belief that in McClellan's military capacity and in the love of the army for him lay the only hope of saving the Capital. He would also have recognized that the President's statement verified the surmise that the purpose even now was not to carry out the promise of putting him in command of all the Eastern forces, with full authority to retrieve if he could the damaged fortunes of the Army of the Potomac, but to use him only momentarily to steer the ship of state past the reef and then throw him over again. And if such an adviser could have convinced McClellan that his own interests and the interests of the army and the Union were bound

together in this emergency, this in substance should have been the response:

"Gentlemen, I am satisfied that whether the situation is as hopeless as you view it or not rests solely on the action you take. It depends upon what you will do to restore the spirit and confidence of the army. The officers and men of that army are fully aware of the circumstances to which you refer and regard those circumstances as affecting them much more than they affect me. They know that their lives were needlessly exposed when they were sent out into a swampy region during a season of flooding rains. They know that, because of the failure of the Government to use the navy to the utmost in cooperation with the army, time was given the enemy to collect a great force, and that they were forced to offer up 15,000 of their number to gain a place which they could have reached without losing a man if they had been properly supported. They know that they were to set out with a force of 156,000 men when they should have had 200,000, and they know that when two-thirds of that insufficient force had reached Fortress Monroe that part of the army was almost hopelessly crippled by the detention of the other third. They know that instead of holding this enfeebled force quiet at Fortress Monroe until the earth and the elements were favorable and the army increased to a hopeful degree of strength, they were recklessly prodded on at once through dispiriting torrents of rain and reviled because they could not rush more swiftly through the bogs. They know that McDowell could have been waiting for them at West Point or could have easily joined them later, but that because of the lethargy or hostility or panic of the government he never came. They know that if McDowell had been sent with them or had joined them, they would have taken Richmond and the terrible seven days' fight and the present disgraceful defeat would have been avoided. When at last they reached an impregnable position and the end of the Rebellion was within their easy grasp they know that all they had fought for and gained at the price of 15,000 lives was thrown away, in a way that seemed to them closely akin to treason. And they were sorely tempted

to go on and crush the Rebellion, regardless of the folly of the Government. They know that on the 14th of August they could have taken Richmond and that I could not secure permission to strike the blow. They know that I was promised the command of the united armies and that the promise was not only not kept, but that even my own army was taken from me. Now they are crestfallen, beaten, dispirited; they trust neither the wisdom nor the good faith of the Government as all these deadly wrongs are still fresh in their minds. To make them efficient soldiers again, their confidence must be restored, their morale and spirit must be revived. Now you come to me without any specific order. Suppose the army were here and I should go to my corps commanders with what you have said to me. They are suspicious; all the presumptions are against you, because of the treatment they have received from the War Department since the 1st of April. The avenue to their hearts lies in the assurance that they will have an opportunity under trusted leaders of meeting the foe again and of obliterating their disgrace of yesterday by a glorious victory. Their first questions will be: What opportunity will we have; what are you authorized to do; where is your commission? And if I tell them of oral instructions, they will simply say: We are being tricked again; McClellan is being put in only for the instant and will be thrown out the moment the panic is over. There is the situation, gentlemen. With the confidence of the army restored by a sincere attitude of the Government, I am sure that I can not only save Washington, but successfully attack Lee."

Such facts should have been hammered home into the mind of the President. They would have illumined the path of duty and responsibility. If positions had been reversed, those past masters of the art of politics, Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Stanton, would have made some such shrewd response, and the response would have been for the public good. General Upton evidently wonders why McClellan did not impose conditions.[1]

And the result? No one can doubt what it would have been. It was only because they could not be safe without

[1] *Military Policy of the United States*, 377.

McClellan that Lincoln and Halleck went to him. He would have been entirely justifiable in considering the situation from the viewpoint of the army and in insisting upon unequivocal proof of good faith. In view of the terror of the time and the justice and good sense of the requirement, they would have yielded; and the President would have bound himself to it beyond any thought of retraction. Washington was so imperiled that Mr. Lincoln would have paid almost any price to save it. He would not have hesitated to accede to a reasonable demand, as he saw no other haven of protection. At the same time, he did not intend to pay an iota more than was exacted from him.

The proof of this,—that is, that the President designed to have McClellan save the city if possible, and to repay him for this great favor with *nothing*,—is at hand.

On September the 5th he said to the Secretary of the Navy: "I must have McClellan to reorganize the army and bring it out of chaos; but there has been a design, a purpose in breaking down Pope, without regard of consequence to the country. It is shocking to see this and to know this; but there is no remedy at present, . . . McClellan has the army with him." [2] In this connection McClellan's parting exhortation to Franklin and his futile appeal to be allowed to take a part in Pope's battles should be remembered.

So it was that the President came to McClellan without any written commission, and even without any explicit authority to confer. He came to impose a task so stupendous that he deemed it impossible; yet on the same principle which led him to give offices to persons indifferent or even hostile to him, in order to gain their support, and to give none to friends whose support he was sure of, he secured this favor from McClellan at the very lowest price: and he got it—for nothing, and without being called upon to make clear the tiniest bit of authority with which he intended to invest the general. Confronting this veteran adept in the diplomacy of politics was one who, though a military genius and a man of brilliant administrative capacity, as the greatest commanders have always

[2] *Diary of Gideon Welles*, I, 113.

been, was like a babe in the arms when it came to matters involving political scheming. He instantly forgot all the indignities and injuries that had been heaped upon him by the President at the instigation of Stanton. He asked no questions as to his new command or to test the intentions or good faith of the Chief Executive. His kind and sympathetic soul held only regret for Mr. Lincoln's gloomy forebodings, and he longed to comfort him. One impulse moved the general: to reassure the President; to revive his despondent spirits. And his confidence that he would surely save the city threw a ray of sunshine into the darkened heart of his visitor.

The President naturally expected that the reinstatement of McClellan, however vague or narrowly circumscribed the terms might be, or how brief the intended use of him, would awaken the strongest remonstrance and even the fiercest rage. He was not mistaken.

The 2d of September was one of those rare days when the Cabinet met. Mr. Welles, the Secretary of the Navy, has given an account of the meeting: "At the stated cabinet meeting on Tuesday, the 2d of September, while the whole community was stirred up and in confusion, and affairs were growing beyond anything that had previously occurred, Stanton entered the council-room a few minutes ahead of Mr. Lincoln, and said, with great excitement, that he had just learned from General Halleck that the President had placed McClellan in command of the forces in Washington. (The information was surprising, and, in view of the prevailing excitement against that officer, alarming.) The President soon came in, and in answer to an inquiry from Mr. Chase, confirmed what Stanton had said. General regret was expressed, and Stanton, with some feeling, remarked that no order to that effect had issued from the War Department. The President calmly, but with some emphasis, said the order was his, and he would be responsible for it to the country. . . . Before separating, the Secretary of the Treasury expressed his apprehension that the reinstatement of McClellan would prove a national calamity." [8]

[8] McClellan, *Own Story*, 545; *Lincoln and Seward*, 194.

It is well to have an account from one of those whom Mr. Welles says were conspiring against McClellan. "The Secretary of War came in. In answer to some inquiry the fact was stated by the President or the Secretary that McClellan had been placed in command of the forces to defend the capital—or rather, to use the President's own words, 'He had set him to putting these troops into the fortifications about Washington, believing that he could do that thing better than any other man.' I remarked that this could be done equally well by the engineer who constructed the forts. . . . The Secretary of War said that no one was now responsible for the defense of the capital; that the order to McClellan was given by the President direct to McClellan, and that General Halleck considered himself relieved from responsibility, although he acquiesced and approved of the order, that McClellan could now shield himself, should anything go wrong, under Halleck, while Halleck would and could disclaim all responsibility for the order given. The President thought Gen. Halleck as much responsible as before, and repeated that the whole scope of the order was simply to direct McClellan to put the troops into the fortifications and command them for the defense of Washington. I remarked . . . that I could not but feel that giving command to him was equivalent to giving Washington to the rebels. *This and more I said.* . . . The President said it distressed him exceedingly to find himself differing on such a point from the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Treasury; that he would gladly resign his place; but that he could not see who could do the work wanted as well as McClellan. I named Hooker, or Sumner, or Burnside, either of whom would do the work better." [4]

Mr. Montgomery Blair, the Postmaster-General, under date April 22, 1870, says:

"The bitterness of Stanton on the reinstatement of McClellan you can scarcely conceive. He preferred to see the capital fall. . . . McClellan was bound to go when the emergency was past, and Halleck and Stanton were furnished a pretense."

[4] McClellan, *Own Story*, 544, 545.

Again, under date April 3, 1879, Mr. Blair says: "The folly and disregard of public interests thus exhibited would be incredible but that the authors of this intrigue, Messrs. Stanton and Chase, when the result of it came, and I proposed the restoration of McClellan to command to prevent the completion of ruin by the fall of the capital, actually declared that they would prefer the loss of the capital to the restoration of McClellan to command. Yet these are the men who have been accounted by a large portion of our countrymen as the civil heroes of the war, whilst McClellan, who saved the capital, was dismissed." [5]

I regret that Mr. Stanton did not keep a diary. He left no account of this meeting, and Mr. Flower, his biographer, gives none. I fear that it would not have been at all proper for any lady to listen to the expression of his views on the general situation.

"The defeat of Pope and placing McC(lellan) in command of the retreating and disorganized forces after the second disaster at Bull Run, interrupted the intrigue which had been planned for the dismissal of McClellan, and was not only a triumph for him but a severe mortification and disappointment for both Stanton and Chase." [6]

On this day, September 2d, Pope telegraphed: "Unless something can be done to restore tone to this army, it will melt away before you know it."

The significance of the reinstatement of the commander cannot easily be overestimated. Like Stanton's destruction of papers, it was a confession. The Administration wished the nation to believe that McClellan as a commander was an utter failure; that he had no military capacity whatever; that he was slow, hesitating, weak, timorous, inefficient; yet in this hour of imminent peril and supreme terror, with the routed army flying back to the Capital, the President and the General-in-Chief knew of no one else, thought of no one else, who could save it.

[5] McClellan, *Own Story*, 545.
[6] *Diary of Gideon Welles*, I, 109.

CHAPTER LIX

THE ARMY AND ITS IDOL—A SCENE WHICH HAS NO PARALLEL —THE MAGIC WAND—THE RESCUED CITY

Many commanders have been loved in varying degrees by their soldiers, but in all the history of the world never did any other leader receive such proof of affection as that which was offered to McClellan on the night of September 2d, 1862. The following graphic description is given by an eye-witness: "About four o'clock on the next afternoon, from a prominent point, we descried in the distance the dome of the Capitol. We would be there at least in time to defend it! Darkness came upon us and still we marched. As the night wore on, we found at each halt that it was more and more difficult to arouse the men from the sleep into which they would apparently fall as soon as they touched the ground. During one of these halts, while Colonel Buchanan, the brigade commander, was resting a little off the road, some distance in advance of the head of the column, it being starlight, two horsemen came down the road toward us. I thought I observed a familiar form, and turning to Colonel Buchanan, said: 'Colonel, if I did not know that General McClellan had been relieved of all command, I should say that he was one of that party,' adding immediately, 'I do really believe it is he!' 'Nonsense,' said the Colonel. 'What would General McClellan be doing out in this lonely place, at this time of night, without an escort?' The two horsemen passed on to where the men were lying, standing, or sitting, and were soon lost in the shadowy gloom. But a few moments had elapsed, however, when Captain John D. Wilkins, of the 3d Infantry (now Colonel of the 5th) came running toward Colonel Buchanan, crying out: 'Colonel, Colonel, General McClellan is here.' The enlisted men caught the sound! Whoever was awake awoke his neigh-

bor. Eyes were rubbed and those tired fellows, as the news passed down the column, jumped to their feet, and sent up such a hurrah as the Army of the Potomac had never heard before. Shout upon shout went out upon the stillness of the night; and as it was taken up on the road and repeated by regiment, brigade, division, and corps, we could hear the roar dying away in the distance. The effect of this man's presence upon the Army of the Potomac,—in sunshine or rain, in darkness or daylight, in victory or defeat,—was electrical, and too wonderful to make it worth while attempting to give a reason for it. Just two weeks from this time, this defeated army, under the leadership of McClellan, won the battles of South Mountain and Antietam, having marched ten days out of the two weeks in order to do it." [1]

Nor was this merely a momentary or impulsive outburst of affection. McClellan always had the hearts of his men. Another observer gives the warmest testimony: "Though a quarter of a century has passed since those darkest days of the war, I still retain a vivid memory of the sudden and complete change which came upon the face of affairs when General McClellan was restored to command. At the time I was serving in Company A, 12th Massachusetts Volunteers, attached to Rickett's division of the First Army corps. The announcement of McClellan's restoration came to us in the early evening of the 2d of September, 1862, just after reaching Hall's Hill, weary from long marching and well-nigh disheartened by recent reverses. The men were scattered about in groups, discussing the events of their ill-starred campaign, and indulging in comments that were decidedly uncomplimentary to those who had been responsible for its mismanagement. We did not know, of course, the exact significance of all that had happened, as we afterward learned it, but being mainly thinking men, we were able to form pretty shrewd guesses as to where the real difficulty lay. Suddenly while these mournful consultations were in full blast, a mounted officer, dashing past our bivouac, reined up enough to shout, 'Little Mac is back here on the road, boys!' The scene that

[1] *Battles and Leaders*, 490, note.

followed can be more easily imagined than described. From extreme sadness we passed in a twinkling to a delirium of delight. A deliverer had come. A real 'rainbow of promise' had appeared suddenly in the dark political sky. The feeling in our division upon the return of General McClellan had its counterpart in all the others, for the Army of the Potomac loved him as it never loved any other leader. In a few days we started upon that long march to Maryland, and whenever General McClellan appeared among his troops, from the crossing of the Potomac at Washington to the grapple of Lee at Antietam, it was the signal for the most spontaneous and enthusiastic cheering I ever listened to or participated in. Men threw their caps high in the air, and danced and frolicked like schoolboys, so glad were they to get their old commander back again. It is true that McClellan had always been fortunate in being able to excite enthusiasm in his troops, but demonstrations at this time took on an added and noticeable emphasis from the fact that he had been recalled to command after what the army had believed to be an unwise and unjust suspension." [2]

Is it not plainly obvious that because of this enthusiastic affection these men would accomplish more for McClellan than for any other leader. His civilian superiors knew this well, and still, when the best efforts of the army were needed, kept him away from it. Surely somewhere, at some time, there must be an accounting for acts like this, for if they be not treason, they have all the semblance and evil effect of it. He was not kept away because he could be of no use, but because it was feared that he would win glory and outshine the Favorite, General Pope. This man, whom the Romans would have crowned with laurel for his brave and skilful fighting in the Peninsula and who was pulled away in the midst of his work, was snubbed and humiliated, because he dared to protest against quitting when success was close at hand and the end of the Rebellion was about to reward his efforts.

The effect of the reinstatement was instantaneous, for, exhausted though they were, the revived courage of the troops

[2] *Battles and Leaders*, 550, 551, note.

dispelled all symptoms of panic forthwith, and a feeling of security filled the city. Notwithstanding his hatred of McClellan, the Secretary of War was now seized with a sense of freedom from danger, which no doubt annoyed him exceedingly, as it was an involuntary tribute to the General; and he must have had qualms of uneasiness whenever he thought that but for McClellan he would have been an exile from the seat of government. Stanton's fear-inspired orders, made with a view to flight, were now of course countermanded by McClellan, who went to work with his accustomed energy, animating the troops, and assigning their various posts for the defense of the city. The whole night of the 2d of September was spent in such work, and when morning dawned the city was safe.

How pleased the President must have been at this vindication of his sagacity and how grateful to the man whose splendid capacity had, as with a magic wand, turned darkest gloom into brightest cheer and sunshine! It is lamentable to have only this species of gratitude to record. "McClellan is working like a beaver," quoth the President. "He seems to be aroused to doing something by the sort of snubbing he got last week." [3] Ah! then the treatment of McClellan at Alexandria was not mere oversight or negligence. It was deliberate and malicious. *He was being snubbed.* And for what, pray? He was the only commander of the Army of the Potomac who ever had cause to boast of his struggles with General Lee, and he had secured, in spite of the best opposition Lee could make with superior forces, a base of operation from which all now admit he would quickly have throttled the Rebellion if the Government had supported him; and as the reward for all this he was snubbed. He was left chafing and inactive, when the full knowledge of what he had done, and what he could do, made it a sacred duty of those in authority to employ his rare talents in behalf of the national cause.

As there was a great panic in the army, of which General Pope's despatch of September 2d is sufficient proof, how is it that General Lee did not follow the beaten Federals closely

[3] Rhodes, *History of the United States*, 136.

and attack Washington? There is no doubt at all as to the reason. It was because McClellan was there. General Lee's wise rule of action was always to seek the path of least resistance. Between attacking McClellan's forces retiring from the James or striking at Pope he chose Pope; and now between the alternatives of advancing upon the ramparts of the Capital City with McClellan in charge of it or invading the North, he remembered Malvern Hill, ignored Washington, and chose to invade the North.

While the Confederate commander naturally assumed that McClellan's services would be used in the defense of Washington, it is evident that he at first supposed that McClellan's powerful enemies would shut him out from any direction of forces in the field, and when he learned that McClellan had assumed command he still felt that the time necessary to put any courage into the disheartened troops would enable him to get an invaluable start. Speaking to General Walker, he explained his intention of taking Harrisburg and, a little later, Philadelphia, Baltimore, or Washington, and of destroying all traffic on the Baltimore and Ohio and the Pennsylvania Railways. Replying to a misgiving that McClellan would interrupt his communications, he added: "He is an able general, but a very cautious one. His enemies among his own people think him too much so. His army is in a very demoralized and chaotic condition, and will not be prepared for offensive operations—or he will not think it so—for three or four weeks. Before that time I hope to be on the Susquehanna." [4]

[4] *Battles and Leaders*, 606.

CHAPTER LX

THE PURSUIT OF LEE—CRAFTY PLOTTING—SORE NEED OF TIME

The chief factor to be kept constantly in mind in weighing the events of the fall of 1862 is the condition of the army as the result of its defeat. It needed reconstruction, reorganization, rest.

Above all, time was needed for the army to regain its excellent morale and the confidence it had had the preceding spring. It was badly demoralized; only a little less so, as a whole, than it was after the first Bull Run. A few weeks before resuming active service would be of the greatest value; but practically no time at all was available. Exhausted from a fortnight of incessant marching, going for long periods at a time without food, yet forced to fight in that hungry condition, the soldiers sorely needed time to recuperate.

The same kind, unsparing attention to his soldiers' interests and wants which had always deserved and held their love was now again exhibited. In a letter to his wife, dated September 5th, the General reveals the tender feeling for his men which attached them so strongly to him.

"Sept. 5, 4 P. M.— . . . It makes my heart bleed to see the poor, shattered remnants of my noble Army of the Potomac, poor fellows! and to see how they love me even now. I hear them calling out to me as I ride among them, 'George, don't leave us again!' 'They sha'n't take you away from us again,' etc., etc. I can hardly restrain myself when I see how fearfully they are reduced in numbers, and realize how many of them lie unburied on the field of battle, where they were uselessly sacrificed. It is the most terrible trial I ever experienced." [1]

Referring to the condition of the army, he says: "You don't know what a task has been imposed upon me. I have

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 567.

been obliged to do the best I can with the broken and discouraged fragments of two defeated armies, by no fault of mine." [2]

If General McClellan,—in view of Stanton's venomous hostility, the wrongs done because of it to him and to the nation, and Mr. Lincoln's furtherance of the Secretary's wishes, a furtherance which was at first reluctant, but at last willing if not eager,—if, I say, in view of all this, General McClellan had formed an ineradicable dislike and distrust of both the Secretary and the President, no one could severely blame him. He had great and oft repeated cause to suspect them and even to hate them.

His sweet and forgiving disposition cannot be better shown than by his own relation of his feelings at this time in a letter to his wife.

"Telegram—Washington, Sept. 7, 2.50 P. M.—We are all well and the entire army is now united, cheerful, and confident. You need not fear the result, for I believe that God will give us the victory. I leave here this afternoon to take command of the troops in the field. The feeling of the government towards me, I am sure, is kind and trusting. I hope, with God's blessing, to justify the great confidence they now repose in me, and will bury the past in oblivion." [3]

At the urgent request of the President, General McClellan, before setting out from Washington, called upon Mr. Stanton, who expressed his regard in exuberant terms of affection. He had always been McClellan's best friend, he assured him, but bad men had made mischief between them. He would always continue to support him cordially. On parting, he embraced the General tenderly and bade him "Godspeed." [4]

Deluded man! This was but another instance of his inexperience with men, for at that very moment the conspirators were actively at work again, scheming for his downfall.

Outside of momentarily taking charge in Washington, his authority was very vague as to time and extent. Apparently,

[2] McClellan, *Own Story*, 568.
[3] *Ibid.*, 567.
[4] *McClellan's Last Service*, 48, 49.

it was purposely conferred in this manner, so that in case of failure he could be charged with lack of authority. I can discover no other reason for a course so unusual in a matter of such paramount importance.

On the 2d and 3d of September the enemy in small force was seen in front of Washington; then it vanished entirely, and the rumor reached McClellan that General Lee intended to invade Maryland. Three corps were sent out to various points northwest of Washington to oppose the crossing of the Potomac by the enemy.[5]

On the 5th, the 2d and the 12th corps were sent to Rockville; on the 6th, the 1st and the 9th corps were sent to Leesburg, and on the 7th the 6th corps reached Rockville. On the afternoon of the 7th the commander himself started out to assume command and conduct the campaign.

Argument is not needed to convince anyone that the order giving McClellan command at Washington did not entitle him to conduct a campaign; and it is equally clear that, as the victorious Southern army was now invading the North, it was gross negligence of the Administration not to direct someone to take command of the army and start after the invaders. This is the testimony of the general:

"As is well known, the result of General Pope's operations had not been favorable, and when I finally resumed command of the troops in and around Washington they were weary, disheartened, their organization impaired, and their clothing, ammunition, and supplies in a pitiable condition. The Army of the Potomac was thoroughly exhausted and depleted by its desperate fighting and severe marches in the unhealthy regions of the Chickahominy and afterwards during the second Bull Run campaign. Its trains, administration service, and supplies were disorganized or lacking, in consequence of the rapidity and manner of its removal from the Peninsula, as well as from the nature of its operations during the second Bull Run campaign. In the departure from the Peninsula, trains, supplies, cavalry, and artillery were often necessarily left at Fort Monroe and Yorktown for lack of

[5] McClellan, *Own Story*, 546.

vessels, as the important point was to move the infantry divisions as rapidly as possible to the support of General Pope. The divisions of the Army of Virginia were also exhausted and weakened, and their trains and supplies disorganized and deficient by the movements in which they had been engaged. . . . Had General Lee remained in front of Washington, it would have been the part of wisdom to hold our own army quiet until its pressing wants were fully supplied, its organization restored, and its ranks filled with recruits,—in brief, prepared for a campaign. But as the enemy maintained the offensive and crossed the upper Potomac to threaten or invade Pennsylvania, it became necessary to meet him at any cost, notwithstanding the condition of the troops; to put a stop to the invasion, save Baltimore and Washington, and throw him back across the Potomac. Nothing but sheer necessity justified the advance of the Army of the Potomac to South Mountain and Antietam in its then condition, and it is to the eternal honor of the brave men who composed it that under such adverse circumstances they gained those victories; for the work of supply and reorganization was continued as best we might while on the march, and after the close of the battles so much remained to be done to place the army in condition for a campaign that the delay which ensued was absolutely unavoidable, and the army could not have entered upon a new campaign one day earlier than it did. The purpose of advancing from Washington was simply to meet the necessities of the moment by frustrating Lee's invasion of the Northern States and, when that was accomplished, it was essential to push with the utmost rapidity the work of reorganization and supply, so that a new campaign might be promptly inaugurated with the army in condition to prosecute it to a successful termination without intermission."[6]

The "Army of Virginia," which had been under the command of General Pope, ceased to exist on the 2d of September, 1862, by force of circumstances, and, so far as appears, without an order issued. The following correspondence is the only known record:

[6] McClellan, *Own Story*, 552.

"ARLINGTON, Sept. 5, 12:05 P. M.
"MAJ.-GEN. HALLECK, Gen.-in-chief:

"I have just received an order from Gen. McClellan to have my command in readiness to march with three days' rations, and further details of the march. What is my command, and where is it? McClellan has scattered it about in all directions, and has not informed me of the position of a single regiment. Am I to take the field, and under Gen. McClellan's orders?

"JNO. POPE,
"Maj.-Gen."

"WASHINGTON, D. C., Sept. 5, 1862.
"MAJ.-GEN. POPE, Arlington:

"The armies of the Potomac and Virginia being consolidated, you will report for orders to the Secretary of War.

"H. W. HALLECK,
"Gen.-in-chief."

Halleck afterward claimed that on September 3d an order was issued to McClellan to pursue the enemy. It is rather peculiar, isn't it, that McClellan knew nothing of such an order? It was evidently a *nunc pro tunc* order, as the lawyers say,—made later as if made before.

The course taken and the total absence of serious complaint about it demonstrate that General McClellan should have pursued his own way on the James, and also that he should have availed himself of this experience with his superiors on the ensuing 7th of November, for the benefit of the army and the good of the country.

The fond farewell of Mr. Stanton should have enlightened General McClellan as to the proper manner of dealing with the astute but timorous Secretary, but the General's own frank character blinded him as to the meaning of the object lesson given to him.

Progress was not swift, yet it was too swift for General Halleck, or for those for whom he spoke, for they feared that the rebels would dodge behind McClellan to the southward and

rush in upon Washington. So despatch after despatch came to him, expressing fear that he was moving too fast and even censuring him for his reckless speed. "The uncertainty at first overhanging Lee's intentions caused the advance from Washington to be made with much circumspection; and it might, perhaps, be fairly chargeable with tardiness, were there not on record repeated despatches of the time from the General-in-chief, charging McClellan with too great a precipitancy of movement for the safety of the Capital." [7]

On the 12th news reached the Capital that Lee was recrossing the Potomac and retiring toward Richmond. This was fully credited, and the President urged McClellan not "to let him get off without being hurt." [8]

The generals of the Army of Virginia, knowing well the condition of the Union army and McClellan's appreciation of it, were amazed at his rapid progress, as we shall see; yet later, with marked disingenuousness, the Government, having charged him with imprudent haste, now charged him with needless slowness and delay in his march.

Mr. Prime, the editor of McClellan's *Own Story,* follows the prevailing fashion in taking a lenient view of the President's attitude toward the general. But the purpose of history should be the eliciting of truth; and all who are free from bias will readily agree that the recorded expressions of Mr. Lincoln concerning General McClellan indicate that at this time he entertained from some cause (probably due to Mr. Stanton's quiet activities) an intense personal dislike for the general, viewing him probably as a formidable political rival. It was his evident intention to sacrifice him, at Mr. Stanton's suggestion, as soon as an excuse could be found after the impending peril was over. If General Lee had retired to Richmond after Second Bull Run, McClellan would have been relieved then; doubtless because of incompetency in letting him get away. But the swift invasion created a continuing peril, which made it impossible at that time to dispense with him. Yet the President disavowed the selection of McClellan

[7] Swinton, *Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac,* 198.
[8] McClellan, *Own Story,* 555.

to command in the field and charged the crime upon Halleck! "I could not have done it," said the President, as if speaking of some act of great moral turpitude.[9]

When the first order in writing for McClellan to take charge in Washington was issued, it read, "By direction of the President," and was signed, "By order of the Secretary of War"; but, as Mr. Stanton hotly repudiated the atrocity, a later one was issued from which it seemed that the President also repudiated it and the presumptive villainy of giving General McClellan a command was at last saddled upon the general-in-chief, for President and Secretary were both omitted, and it stood, "By order of Maj.-Gen. Halleck."

The course determined upon as to McClellan seemed to be this: if he should fail, he would be charged with usurping military authority, and, with the fanatical frenzy of his foes fully aroused, he would perhaps be executed. If, on the other hand, he should save the North from the terror and disaster of being overrun and ravaged by a triumphant rebel host, one would suppose that even his enemies would have been willing to concede that no honor and no praise could be too great for him. But not at all, not at all. No victor's crown awaited him, even for the highest measure of success; if he saved the North, he would *not* be executed; he would merely be dismissed quietly at the first convenient moment. His reluctance to leave the James, the defeat of Pope, and the present unauthorized leadership of the army to repel a dangerous invasion would all be generously ignored or forgiven, and he would be allowed to vanish into obscurity unpunished.

Such are the natural fruits of fanaticism. But Edwin M. Stanton, in my opinion, was not a fanatic. He was a subtle diplomat, who found in the fanaticism about him a most useful instrument for the accomplishment of his plans. The ultra radical fervor and intensity of the time was a harp from which his deft fingers evoked the strains which were most pleasing to him.

[9] *Diary of Gideon Welles*, I, 116.

CHAPTER LXI

HARPER'S FERRY—HALLECK'S BLUNDER

At this time Mr. Stanton was apparently taking no part in the conduct of the war. Throughout the whole month of September the President never went to his office. General Halleck was directing military operations without a suggestion from anyone. But whether one views the Secretary in deifying pages of Mr. Flower or Mr. Gorham or in the dark colors in which his co-secretary Mr. Welles paints him, the conclusion is equally irresistible that General Halleck had no views of his own and that he was merely the mouthpiece of the head of the War Department.

The story of the capture of Harper's Ferry is interesting, amusing, and exasperating. Mr. Stanton's ingenuity has so withdrawn attention from the real issue that the writers who reek with the Stantonian virus sincerely believe that McClellan, by failing to hurry on more rapidly, was somehow greatly at fault, indeed responsible for a national disaster; yet these writers all know, not only that the condition of the army made speed impracticable, but that the Administration itself was a leaden weight upon the commander's feet, because of its panicky fear that he was going too fast for the safety of Washington, a fear that made it send hourly orders to him to proceed slowly and cautiously. Even the friends of McClellan have not given the subject sufficient consideration to discover that when all the facts are known there is no longer any room for cavil.

In outline, the facts are as follows:

At the outset General Lee had no intention of going to Harper's Ferry. That place was not in his itinerary, according to Colonel Henry Kyd Douglas, C. S. A. But having passed north of it and reached Frederick, he learned that it

had not been evacuated by its garrison of 12,520 men; he then sent Jackson to recross the Potomac much higher up and follow the Virginia shore down to Harper's Ferry and capture the garrison. General McClellan, before leaving Washington, advised the evacuation of the place, though it was not then within his command. He also advised that if it was to be held, the garrison should occupy Maryland Heights. These suggestions were repeated on the 10th. If either advice had been taken, General Lee's purpose would have been foiled. As it was, the garrison was captured and the place was then immediately abandoned, showing that the garrison was the sole prize sought for, and that if it had not been there, Lee would not have disturbed the place. This statement, if true, shows simply that the loss of the garrison was due solely to the fact that McClellan's advice was not taken; but through the machinations of the War Department, the whole discussion has been whether McClellan rushed Franklin's corps ahead fast enough.

Before leaving Washington, McClellan went with Seward to General Halleck. He advised that the troops in Harper's Ferry should abandon it and join the main army, that if it was determined to hold the place the enemy could easily surround and capture the garrison, and that the garrison should be located on Maryland Heights, where it could defend itself until relieved. These statements were listened to with ill-concealed contempt by the General-in-Chief, who said everything was right as it was, that the news given was entirely erroneous. McClellan says: "Harper's Ferry was not at that time in any sense under my control, but I told Mr. Seward that I regarded the arrangements there as exceedingly dangerous; that in my opinion the proper course was to abandon the position and unite the garrison (ten thousand men, about) to the main army of operations, for the reason that its presence at Harper's Ferry would not hinder the enemy from crossing the Potomac; that if we were not successful in the approaching battle Harper's Ferry would be of no use to us, and its garrison necessarily lost; that if we were successful we would immediately recover the post without any difficulty, while the

addition of ten thousand men to the active army would be an important factor in insuring success. I added that if it were determined to hold the position the existing arrangements were all wrong, as it would be easy for the enemy to surround and capture the garrison, and that the garrison ought at least to be drawn to the Maryland Heights, where they could resist attack until relieved." [1]

On September the 10th the following despatch was sent to General Halleck: "Sept. 10, 9:45 A. M.—Colonel Miles is at or near Harper's Ferry, as I understand, with 9,000 troops. He can do nothing where he is, but could be of great service if ordered to join me. I suggest that he be ordered to join me by the most practicable route." [2]

And this answer came: "There is no way for Colonel Miles to join you at present; his only chance is to defend his works till you can open communications with him." [3]

But on the 14th Colonel Davis marched out of Harper's Ferry with the cavalry and had no trouble in escaping to Hagerstown.

On the 12th McClellan was directed to take command of the garrison at Harper's Ferry as soon as he could establish communication with it. Communication had then been cut off. The Rebel forces were then already blocking the way. As the situation at Harper's Ferry at that time was wholly due to the fact that McClellan's advice had been ignored, the practical answer to this direction, if military usages had permitted it, would have been: "You are too late. If I make the effort with this tired and disheartened army, I cannot arrive in time. You are entirely responsible for the loss of the place and could easily have prevented it by following the advice I gave a week ago." But military etiquette would not permit this.

Before showing the steps that were taken to relieve the beleaguered town, we will see more exactly how it came to be

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 550.
[2] *Ibid.*, 558.
[3] *Ibid.*, 559.

invested. We know this fully now from the accounts of Confederate officers.

On the 5th of September the Confederates crossed the Potomac near Leesburg, about half way between Washington and Harper's Ferry, and proceeded to Frederick, in Maryland. While in camp near that city five days later Lee learned, to his great surprise, that Harper's Ferry had not been evacuated. The high esteem which Lee entertained for McClellan's military capacity led him to suppose that the wisest thing to be done would surely be done; but, as Colonel Douglas says, General Lee did not then know that this blunder was Halleck's. Jackson, McLaws, and Walker were at once started off to capture and hold Harper's Ferry, for which Lee cared nothing; but he wished "to capture the garrison and stores" which had been so foolishly left by Halleck for him to seize, against the earnest advice of McClellan. On September 13th the attacking forces arrived; early on the 14th General McLaws took possession (unopposed) of Maryland Heights and General Walker with equal ease of Loudoun Heights. Colonel Miles with the garrison, to the amazement of the Confederates, was on Bolivar Heights, the weakest of the three prominences. General Jackson was not yet there, but soon afterward came. General Walker assures us that the commanding general intended to summon Colonel Miles to surrender; if he refused twenty-four hours were to be given to remove the non-combatants, and the place was then to be carried by assault. General Walker was ordered not to fire unless he was forced to. This course alarmed General Walker, who felt that General Lee would be in fearful peril if the capture of Harper's Ferry were not swiftly effected. But General Jackson could not be persuaded that the whole Federal army was near, even when the heavy booming of artillery toward South Mountain was heard growing louder and louder every moment. Evidently he did not believe that with such an army McClellan could make such speed. And a few days later he said: "I thought I knew McClellan [they were classmates at West Point], but this movement of his puzzles me." General Walker felt the danger from McClellan's unexpected approach

so much that he successfully tempted the Union batteries to fire upon a couple of his regiments, and this gave the eagerly desired excuse to begin a bombardment, which continued all the afternoon of the 14th. His batteries were 1,000 feet higher than the Union batteries, and so had a vast advantage; and the end seemed near when night came and granted a reprieve. At daybreak on the 15th the Confederates had selected excellent positions of superior elevation. Although for an hour the Federal guns made gallant response, the return then grew weaker and weaker; at 8 A. M. Colonel Miles gave up the contest, and 12,520 men, 73 pieces of ordnance, 13,000 muskets, and many hundred wagons rewarded the victors for their efforts. The statement that Jackson intended to delay 24 hours is very seriously attacked. Yet it seems to be strongly supported by many considerations. The difficulty of making progress with such a crestfallen and disorganized mass of men was so fully understood and appreciated by the Southern generals that McClellan's advance, under such conditions and with such an army, was amazing.

Upon no other theory can be explained the long, circuitous route taken by General Jackson, under General Lee's order, nor the leisurely pursuit of it, nor the otherwise strange fact that General Jackson himself was the last to appear at Harper's Ferry. It was all upon the theory that there was plenty of time. Moreover, the statements of General Jackson and General Lee, already given, indicate this. The great military capacity of General Lee is now universally admitted; yet we cannot acquit him of a gross blunder and of recklessly exposing himself to a disaster which would have been practically fatal to his plans unless we conclude that he felt sure that McClellan could not possibly reach either wing of his army while apart, and that the impediments in the way of requisite reconstruction put it entirely out of the bounds of accomplishment. This view, which alone can preserve General Lee's well-founded reputation for sagacity, when taken in connection with the surprise at McClellan's arrival, proves that McClellan's march was marvelously speedy, everything consid-

ered, and at the same time fortifies the very positive statement of General Walker.

There is also another factor in the consideration. General Johnson and Colonel Douglas, fellow-officers, have written articles asserting that General Walker must be in error; yet this seems incredible when we consider, first, that neither General Johnson nor Colonel Douglas knew anything of the matter personally, that they both show plainly their high opinion of General Walker's probity and honor, and, second, that General Walker makes it clear either that he is right or that he lies. Not only does he tell of the signal to him not to fire and of the intended 24 hours of grace, but also of his ineffective attempt to persuade Jackson that the guns heard meant the nearness of the whole Union army. The steps taken by him to force the fight is a practical proof of his understanding then, and the fact that his firing long preceded that of Hill, Lawton, and McLaws, also corroborates his accuracy. But, above all, Jackson and he rode away to Antietam together at 2 A. M. on the 16th; he then excused himself to Jackson for forcing the fight, and Jackson's reply leaves no room for mistake. He said: "It was just as well as it was; but I could not believe that the fire you reported indicated the advance of McClellan in force."

All these matters being considered, the case in favor of General Walker's contention is very strongly supported by the evidence. Moreover, General Walker's account seems highly plausible in itself, as General Jackson's kind and pious nature made him loath to injure non-combatants. If the intended action had been taken "General Lee would undoubtedly have been driven into the Potomac before any portion of the Confederate force around Harper's Ferry could have reinforced him."[4] It is absolutely clear from General Walker's account that if Colonel Miles had assembled all his forces on Maryland Heights before the 7th, when McClellan first recommended it, or on the 10th, when he urged it, the forces of Jackson, McLaws and Walker would have been held in check longer than

[4] *Battles and Leaders*, 609, 611.

the 24 hours necessary to relieve Colonel Miles and to crush the isolated forces of General Lee.

Colonel Douglas notes that the plans of McClellan "were quickly and skilfully made. Had they been executed more rapidly, or had Jackson been slower and less sure, the result must have been a disastrous one to us. But military critics disposed to censure General McClellan for not being equal to his opportunities should credit him with the embarrassment of his position. He had not been in command of this army two weeks. It was a large army, but a heterogeneous one, with many old troops dispirited by recent defeat, and many new troops who had never been under fire. With such an army a general as cautious as McClellan does not take great risks, nor put the safety of his army rashly 'to the touch to win or lose it all.' General McClellan was inclined by nature to magnify the forces of the enemy, and had he known General Lee's weakness he would have ventured more. Yet, when we remember what Pope had done and suffered just before, and what happened to Burnside and Hooker not long after, their friends can hardly sit in judgment upon McClellan." [5]

The most vital factor of all is not noted here. The hostility of the Washington authorities, together with the unreliable condition of the army, made caution imperative and any departure from it foolhardiness. Moreover, Colonel Douglas evidently did not know that McClellan was ordered not to go swiftly.

[5] *Battles and Leaders*, 624.

CHAPTER LXII

HARPER'S FERRY CONTINUED—FRANKLIN'S ADVANCE

General Longstreet assures us that the Confederate movement upon Harper's Ferry was a fatal error. That the situation was a very serious one. "McClellan was close upon us. As we moved out of Frederick he came on and occupied that place." Between the opinion of James Longstreet and that of Robert E. Lee I do not hesitate to prefer the latter. Lee's judgment was that McClellan, in force sufficient to warrant an attack, could not reach him before Jackson's return. He was right. He thought he would have still more time, but that does not affect the question.

On the 12th of September, as we have seen, General McClellan was directed to take charge of Harper's Ferry as soon as he was in communication with it. There was no rumor of any serious attack upon it then, but at the same time it was known that some force of the enemy intervened and that communication was cut off. On the 13th he entered Frederick, and then it was that a most interesting document was found wrapped about two cigars, and brought to him. It read as follows:[1]

"HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA,
"Sept. 9, 1862.

"SPECIAL ORDERS, No. 191.

"The army will resume its march to-morrow, taking the Hagerstown road. General Jackson's command will form the advance, and after passing Middletown, with such portion as he may select, will take the route towards Sharpsburg, cross the Potomac at the most convenient point, and by Friday night take possession of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, capture such of the enemy as may be at Martinsburg, and intercept such as may attempt to escape from Harper's Ferry.

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 573.

"General Longstreet's command will pursue the same road as far as Boonsborough, where it will halt with the reserve, supply, and baggage trains of the army.

"General McLaws, with his own division and that of Gen. R. H. Anderson, will follow General Longstreet; on reaching Middletown he will take the route to Harper's Ferry, and by Friday morning possess himself of the Maryland Heights, and endeavor to capture the enemy at Harper's Ferry and vicinity.

"General Walker with his division, after accomplishing the object in which he is now engaged, will cross the Potomac at Cheek's Ford, ascend its right bank to Lovettsville, take possession of Loudon Heights, if practicable, by Friday morning; Key's Ford on his left, and the road between the end of the mountain and the Potomac on his right. He will, as far as practicable, cooperate with General McLaws and General Jackson in intercepting the retreat of the enemy.

"General D. H. Hill's division will form the rear-guard of the army, pursuing the road taken by the main body. The reserve artillery, ordnance, and supply-trains, etc., will precede General Hill.

"General Stuart will detach a squadron of cavalry to accompany the commands of Generals Longstreet, Jackson, and McLaws, and, with the main body of the cavalry, will cover the route of the army and bring up all the stragglers that may have been left behind.

"The commands of Generals Jackson, McLaws, and Walker, after accomplishing the objects for which they have been detached, will join the main body of the army at Boonsborough or Hagerstown.

"Each regiment on the march will habitually carry its axes in the regimental ordnance-wagons, for the use of the men in their encampments, to procure wood, etc.

"By command of Gen. R. E. Lee.

"R. H. CHILTON,
"Assist. Adj.-Gen.

"MAJ.-GEN. D. H. HILL,
"Commanding Division."

Longstreet is of the opinion that such an order would usually be taken as a snare, and he shows that in fact this one did mislead, but it informed McClellan of the attack on Harper's Ferry, and he at once sent the following letter to General Franklin:[2]

"HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
"Camp near Frederick,
"Sept. 13th, 1862, 6:20 P. M.

"GENERAL: I have now information as to movement and intentions of the enemy. Jackson has crossed the upper Potomac to capture the garrison at Martinsburg and cut off Miles's retreat towards the West. A division on the South side of the Potomac was to carry Loudon Heights and cut off his retreat in that direction. McLaws with his own command and the division of R. H. Anderson was to move by Boonsborough and Rohrersville to carry the Maryland Heights. The signal officers inform me that he is now in Pleasant Valley. The firing shows that Miles still holds out. Longstreet was to move to Boonsborough, and then there halt with the reserve corps; D. H. Hill to form the rear-guard; Stuart's cavalry to bring up the stragglers, etc. We have cleared out all the cavalry this side of the mountains and north of us. The last I heard from Pleasanton he occupied Middletown after several sharp skirmishes. A division of Burnside's command, including Hooker's corps, march this evening and early to-morrow morning, followed by the corps of Sumner and Banks, and Sykes's division, upon Boonsborough to carry that position. Couch has been ordered to concentrate his division and join you as rapidly as possible. Without waiting for the whole of that division to join, you will move at daybreak in the morning by Jefferson and Burkittsville upon the road to Rohrersville. I have reliable information that the mountain-pass by this road is practicable for artillery and wagons. If this pass is not occupied by the enemy in force, seize it as soon as practicable and debouch upon Rohrersville, in order to cut off the retreat of or destroy McLaws's command. If you find

[2] McClellan, *Own Story*, 561.

this pass held by the enemy in large force, make all your dispositions for the attack and commence it about half an hour after you hear severe firing at the pass on the Hagerstown pike, where the main body will attack. Having gained the pass, your duty will be first to cut off, destroy, or capture McLaws's command and relieve Colonel Miles. If you effect this, you will order him to join you at once with all his disposable troops, first destroying the bridges over the Potomac, if not already done; and, leaving a sufficient garrison to prevent the enemy from passing the ford, you will return by Rohrersville on the direct road to Boonsborough, if the main column has not succeeded in its attack. If it has succeeded, take the road to Rohrersville, to Sharpsburg, and Williamsport, in order either to cut off the retreat of Hill and Longstreet towards the Potomac, or prevent the repassage of Jackson. I believe I have sufficiently explained my intentions. I ask of you at this important moment all your intellect and the utmost activity that a general can exercise.

"GEO. B. McCLELLAN,
"Maj.-Gen. Commanding.

"MAJ.-GEN. W. B. FRANKLIN,
"Commanding 6th Corps."

Two things are obvious on the face of this letter. The closing sentence proves beyond all power of questioning it that General McClellan was making an appeal to this brave, patriotic, and capable officer not merely to be quick but to exhaust every effort to reach the goal at the earliest moment possible. To fancy after that that McClellan could have used greater energy seems either unfair or irrational. But certain critics say: "Why wait until morning? Why did he not start Franklin off that very evening? For if he had started at once he would have arrived in time." The letter shows why, and shows the condition of things in this conglomeration of an army. Franklin with his staff could have mounted swift horses the instant the order came, and never drawing rein, if nothing stayed them, might have been at Harper's Ferry on the night before the surrender. But this is clearly nonsense.

The staff could not have reached there at all. This is the blunder these critics make, of taking for granted what was not true,—namely, that Franklin could have started at once with ample force for the object in view. It seems to me that it is only an intensely biased mind which cannot see that this is absolutely and plainly negatived by the very terms of the letter itself. Consider these two sentences: "Couch has been ordered to concentrate his division and join you as rapidly as possible. Without waiting for the whole of that division to join you, you will move at daybreak in the morning by Jefferson and Burkittsville upon the road to Rohrersville." This means: "Your force at present is too small, so I am sending Couch to you. All his troops cannot reach you by daybreak, but haste is imperative, so go ahead at that time with whatever you have." Why did he not detach more troops from the main army? Couch was sent because he was most available—to send others would have meant still more delay. The way was not clear to Harper's Ferry. A part of it ran through a narrow, heavily-wooded gorge known as Crampton's Gap, five miles from Maryland Heights; and here Franklin had to fight his way against the fierce opposition of a force of 2,200 men under General Cobb. At 7 A. M. on September the 15th Franklin was in sight of Maryland Heights; and if Colonel Miles had held this eminence his rescue was assured. But Maryland Heights was occupied by the Confederates; it was now clear that if Franklin had arrived twelve hours earlier it could have made no difference, for the rebel forces seemed to him double his own, and their great advantage of position made an attack too rash to be seriously considered. Later, on the same day, long before Franklin's army could have gathered strength enough to make an attack hopeful, Jackson and his comrades were off for Antietam.

On the 14th McClellan received an oral message from Colonel Miles that he had abandoned all the heights,—Maryland, Bolivar, and Loudon,—that they were all occupied by the enemy, that his force was in Harper's Ferry, and that he could hold out for two days longer. The messenger was instructed to get back with the news that aid was coming rapidly.

A little later, on the same day, three different couriers were sent to Colonel Miles by three different routes, each bearing a copy of the following letter:[8]

"MIDDLETOWN,
"Sept. 14, 1862.

"COLONEL: The army is being rapidly concentrated here. We are now attacking the pass on the Hagerstown road over the Blue Ridge. A column is about attacking the Burkittsville and Boonsborough Pass. You may count on our making every effort to relieve you. You may rely on my speedily accomplishing that object. Hold out to the last extremity. If it is possible, reoccupy the Maryland Heights with your whole force. If you can do that, I will certainly be able to relieve you. As the Catoctin valley is in our possession, you can safely cross the river at Berlin or its vicinity so far as opposition on this side of the river is concerned. Hold out to the last.

"GEORGE B. McCLELLAN,
"Maj.-Gen. Commanding.

"COL. D. S. MILES."

It does not appear that any of the couriers succeeded in his mission.

General Upton, in his *Military Policy of the United States*, demonstrates that McClellan was not open to any criticism as to the capture of Harper's Ferry, and that if McClellan had been given command of it in time, it would not have been captured.

[8] McClellan, *Own Story*, 560, 561.

CHAPTER LXIII

THE LOST ORDER—SOUTH MOUNTAIN

Many Northern authors believe that the possession of General Lee's lost order, the famous Special Order No. 191, was such an immense advantage that it should have brought about the immediate overthrow of the Rebellion.

But that brave and able Confederate leader and most engaging, frank, and lovable gentleman, Gen. Daniel H. Hill, makes it evident that the prize was an injury, not a benefit, for it convinced the Federal general that Longstreet's corps was at South Mountain when it was actually at Hagerstown. General Hill says that two important statements were contained in the order: one the Federal commander knew already,—that Jackson had gone to Harper's Ferry; the other deceived him,—namely, that Longstreet was at Boonsboro (South Mountain). General Hill adds: "But for the resulting mistake about the position of our forces, McClellan could have captured Lee's trains and artillery and interposed between Jackson and Longstreet before noon on that 14th of September. The losing of the despatch was the saving of Lee's army."

While Franklin was fighting his way through Crampton's Gap, another column of the Union army was forcing its way through Turner's Gap. The conflict here is generally known as the battle of South Mountain. In the Maryland campaign the Ninth Corps (Burnside's) seemed always to thwart the hopes of the commander. At South Mountain, as General Hill tells us, if General Cox of that corps had pressed Hill's comparatively weak force, it would have been routed hours before Longstreet came to his aid. With respect to the blocking of this mountain pass General Lee's report states: "Learning that Harper's Ferry had not surrendered and that the enemy

was advancing more rapidly than was convenient from Fredericktown, I determined to return with Longstreet's command to strengthen D. H. Hill's and Stuart's divisions engaging in holding the passes of the mountains lest the enemy should fall upon McLaws's rear, drive him from the Maryland Heights, and thus relieve the garrison at Harper's Ferry."

But Stuart was not there on the 14th. He had gone to Crampton's Gap. Early that morning the artillery at Crampton's Gap could be distinctly heard even at Frederick; it was therefore surmised that McClellan's whole army was crossing the Blue Ridge at that point, and Stuart hurried there.

General Hill believes that "if McClellan had thrown his whole force upon Crampton's Gap, Jackson could have escaped across the Potomac, but the force under Lee in person (Longstreet's and Hill's division) must have been caught. But McClellan was too cautious for so daring a venture." He thinks that Frederick the Great would have done it, but "the American soldier preferred to do sure work rather than brilliant work, his natural caution being increased by the carping criticism of his enemies." [1] The justice of this view on the part of a foeman might well be imitated by certain Northern critics, but unfortunately politics makes fiercer enemies than war.

General Hill's account of the struggle at South Mountain, however, makes it evident that if General Franklin had not been dragged away uselessly, because of the War Department's senseless attitude as to Harper's Ferry, or if General Cox had recognized a fact which actual contact should have made apparent,—namely, that the force which opposed him was far too light to hold its ground against him,—the pass would have been swiftly cleared. Garland had only 1,000 men on the rebel right. Cox's force is claimed to have been 3,000. General Garland was soon killed; this created a panic, and his troops flew in confusion behind the mountain, leaving 200 prisoners. The way was now clear for the Union army. Only a pretense of opposition was made by running a couple of guns into position; and staff officers, couriers, teamsters,

[1] *Battles and Leaders*, II, 565, 566.

and cooks were gathered to make a show of support for the guns. General Hill says he never felt lonelier. But a brisk fire was opened, and the victorious Federals, thanks to the Lost Despatch which filled the woods with imaginary foes, retreated to their first position and remained there all day,—that is, until 5 o'clock. And at 3:30 Longstreet arrived from Hagerstown with 8 brigades. About 5 P. M. the battle was renewed, and this time by the Union right wing, composed of the brigades of Meade, Ricketts, and Hatch, to dislodge the brigades of Rodes, Garnett, and Kemper from the crest of the mountain. The defense was gallant and stubborn, the attack equally so, and the Rebels were finally driven from the crest largely through the persistence of General Meade (General Hill praises him warmly), who succeeded in turning the left flank of Rodes's command. Before night closed in, the Union army held the mountain top. In the morning the foe had vanished. At this battle in the evening the available Union force numbered 23,778, the available Rebel force 15,000. The Union losses were 1,813, the Confederate losses 7,321. If General Cox had pressed ahead about 9 in the morning, the mountain would have been swept of foes. General Lee's trains then moving along the western side would have been captured, the two wings of his army hopelessly separated, and his own portion of it inextricably ensnared.

It was General Hill who held the attacking force in check from early morning until 5 P. M. On the Northern side, and prominent in the evening assault, was Gen. John Gibbon. John Gibbon and Lardner Gibbon were groomsmen at General Hill's wedding. John fought for the North and Lardner for the South.

The critic of *The Dial*[2] assures us that "the forcing of Turner's Pass was most skilfully and successfully done, and caused Lee to prepare for and consider an immediate retirement to Virginia. Considering the circumstances, the forcing of the mountain pass was promptly done. Lee's 'lost orders,' which came to McClellan's possession, placed at the pass a Confederate force sufficient to hold it against a host. As a

[2] XXXI, 321.

matter of fact, a large part of this force had gone toward Hagerstown; but of this, McClellan could have no knowledge. Even as it was, the Confederate force left at the pass was sufficient to prevent Cox from gaining the crest to the south of the pass, and Gibbon from making any headway in front of the pass. Meade's successful gaining of the crest by assault on the right compelled Lee to abandon the position. At Fairfield Pass, in July, 1863, a small Confederate rear-guard was sufficient to make so capable a corps commander as Sedgwick, with so large a force as the Sixth Corps, think that the pass could only be forced after long delay; and Sedgwick's decision had never been questioned. In the ensuing battle of Antietam,—a wasteful engagement on Lee's part, and one fought after he had seen that his campaign of invasion had come to grief,—McClellan only failed of a decisive tactical success because of the well-meaning Burnside's shortcomings as a corps commander. But even then, all the substantial results were with McClellan. Lee's scheme of invading Pennsylvania had been abandoned before. From being the aggressor, he had from South Mountain onward been upon the defensive; and he now abandoned the battlefield and returned to Virginia."

In the battle of South Mountain, General Reno, a resolute and gallant leader, was lost to the Union.

When on the morning of the 15th it was found that the enemy had decamped, McClellan hoped to overtake him and resume the attack that day; and he could have done so but for the lethargy of Burnside and his corps. That lethargy was to harm the Commander infinitely more at Antietam.

CHAPTER LXIV

ANTIETAM

After "the discomfiture" at South Mountain, as he calls it, General Longstreet thought that General Lee should immediately have retired into Virginia. The invasion was really at an end. General Lee may have had the same thought, but he could not yield to it. He probably did not believe that the demoralized mob he had lately seen rushing in terror from his veterans could have been sufficiently divested of their fright to withstand him in a general engagement, where he could select the field; and if he could rout them again, the whole North would be open to him. The Antietam, a large creek, runs almost due south (a little southwest) into the Potomac. About a mile to the west of it and two miles from the Potomac is the town of Sharpsburg. A ridge extends along the west bank a short distance away, with undulations in its summit, supplying an excellent shelter for both infantry and artillery. It is a long natural redoubt, an excellent position; but if a rout should come, then the field would be dangerous, for close behind flows the Potomac. General Lee felt sure that there would be no rout. In this vicinity the creek is crossed by four stone bridges. By avoiding detail which would only obscure the description, the main features of the struggle can be made clear.

Hooker and Mansfield held the Union right wing, Sumner the center, and Burnside the left.

McClellan's plan of battle, it is said, was simple and should have been successful. If McClellan's enemies were right in asserting that he was weak and non-aggressive he would have merely planted himself in Lee's path, fortified his position, and let Lee attack or retire as he deemed best. That is what General Meade did at Gettysburg, and both Federals and Con-

federates agree that he was a determined and aggressive man. Very few generals would have taken the initiative, in McClellan's position and with such a heterogeneous mass of men. If the reader will consult all the accounts of this battle, he will find nowhere any intimation that the idea of acting on the defensive ever occurred to McClellan. No word of it appears anywhere. This was the plan: the battle was to begin with an attack by the Union right, under Generals Hooker and Mansfield, to be followed swiftly by an attack by Burnside on the enemy's right; on the appearance of the success of either wing, the Union center was to advance under General Porter.

As to the enemy's position, General McClellan observes: "Their left and center were upon and in front of the Sharpsburg and Hagerstown turnpike, hidden by woods and irregularities of the ground; their extreme left resting upon a wooded eminence near the cross-roads to the north of J. Miller's farm, and extending to the Potomac. Their line extended south, the right resting upon the hills to the south of Sharpsburg, near Snavely's farm. The bridge over the Antietam near this point was strongly covered by riflemen protected by rifle-pits, stone fences, etc., and enfiladed by artillery. The ground in front of this line consisted of undulating hills, their crests in turn commanded by others in their rear. On all favorable points the enemy's artillery was posted, and their reserves, hidden from view by the hills on which their line of battle was formed, could manœuvre unobserved by our army, and from the shortness of their line could rapidly reinforce any point threatened by our attack. Their position, stretching across the angle formed by the Potomac and Antietam, their flanks and rear protected by these streams, was one of the strongest to be found in this region of the country, which is well adapted to defensive warfare." [1] It was "a natural Gibraltar." [2]

A preliminary advance of the right, which McClellan himself led to the top of the ridge on the west of the Antietam,

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 587, 588.
[2] Stine, *Army of the Potomac*, 217.

was made on the afternoon of September the 16th. There was a sharp contest and the Union troops remained in possession of the ground first taken, and there spent the night. The battle was resumed at this point as soon as daylight came and raged for many hours, the enemy's left being forced back a great distance to the Dunker Church. During the noon hour, General Franklin came upon the field from Crampton's Gap; a part of his force went immediately into action and drove the now advancing enemy back to the Dunker Church. General Franklin was eager to throw all his corps into this fight on the right, but it was now the middle of the afternoon, and Sumner's corps were so badly shaken up by the hot fighting of the day that even that fierce old bulldog felt that it would be reckless to risk another assault, as it would rest entirely on General Franklin's force. Between the brave eagerness of Franklin to attack and the prudent anxiety of General Sumner as to the result, General McClellan decided, in view of the condition of the troops, to risk nothing further.

A factor in this decision no doubt was the fact that 15,000 fresh troops were expected to arrive in the morning. Another factor, equally potent no doubt, was the balking of his intentions through the incapacity of Burnside. Not only did Burnside fail to get the direct advantage expected, but his impotency allowed the Confederates to concentrate practically their whole strength in resisting Hooker, Mansfield, and Sumner. If he had only made a respectable showing toward carrying out the commander's wishes, the right wing would not have been held at bay. Let us see how this occurred. In the forenoon of the 16th General Burnside was directed to take a position beside the bridge now known as the Burnside Bridge. It was nearly night when this was accomplished. He was also informed on the 16th that he would be expected to attack on the next morning at daybreak.[8] In the morning many successive orders were sent to him to carry Bridge No. 3 and clear the heights beyond. The work was done gallantly by his troops at a time when it was most difficult as there was no fighting at any other point and the rebels could devote

[8] Curtis, *McClellan's Last Service*, 84.

their sole attention to him. But it was too late after 3 P. M., and when his troops were in the full tide of success Gen. A. P. Hill's force of 2,500 arrived from Harper's Ferry and blocked his further progress. There were hot discussions as to when he received the first order. General McClellan says he sent the first order at 8 A. M. General Sackett states that at about 9 o'clock he went to General Burnside as fast as his horse could carry him, with a more insistent order, and the latter said: "You are the third or fourth one who has been to me with similar orders." [4] On the other hand, General Cox stoutly contends that the first order came at ten.

While General Sackett was with Burnside, Colonel Key came to urge carrying the bridge and heights at all costs, and Burnside ordered assaults, which were for a long time unsuccessful. After carrying the bridge and heights there was another halt, and Colonel Key came again from McClellan. They had hardly got started again when General A. P. Hill came and checked their progress. As the carrying of the bridge and heights about one o'clock proves the feasibility of the plan, General Burnside is far from being excused upon the assumption that the order reached him first at ten. If the successful attack which was made at one had been made at ten, this would have removed the pressure from the right wing; and there is no reason to doubt that both wings would have been successful and that Porter's troops could then have completed the disruption of the Rebel host. It will be seen that McClellan's method was not to attack the Rebel left and right together, but to begin on the rebel left and to throw such vigor into this attack that General Lee would be tempted to weaken his right, which was yet unharassed, to defend his left; and so it happened. In fact, before the battle began, General Lee had already somewhat weakened his right to strengthen his left by taking from the right Hood's two brigades; and when the actual fighting was in full progress, seeing how easy it was to hold Burnside beyond the bridge, he took away two whole divisions,—McLaws's and Walker's, two-thirds of his force confronting Burnside,—to support his imperiled left.

[4] McClellan, *Own Story*, 609.

Here was Burnside's opportunity, for there remained but 400 at the bridge and 2,500 in all against Burnside's 14,000. And it was not until then, when the opposing force was so depleted, that Burnside's order came to pass beyond the bridge toward Sharpsburg. The evidence is strong that this was at 8 o'clock. As the plan of McClellan is known beyond any doubt, and as both the Confederate and the Northern officers tell us that McClellan supervised the battle from a splendid position to oversee the whole field of operations, it is reasonable to believe that he sent the order just when the fight on the enemy's left was hottest and when he thought that the force in front of Burnside had been most weakened. Of the dereliction of General Burnside, Colonel Powell says: "Burnside was ordered the night before to be ready to attack early, that the enemy might be kept from concentrating on our right, and ordered at 8 o'clock to carry the bridge with a dash and to storm the bluff beyond it. Aide after aide was sent to find why it wasn't done, and with the same order more urgent; and at 9 o'clock Colonel Sackett was sent with the same order, that it positively must be done and a strong movement made towards Sharpsburg. Colonel Sackett was to stay there and help to do it. Three hours later, Colonel Key, Senior Aide, went with the same order, imperative not to stop at any sacrifice of life, for the day depended on it; and at last at one o'clock the bridge and bluff were carried, and then another stop; and meanwhile a heavy concentration was made against our right, its splendidly successful attack checked with great carnage, and the very thing Burnside was ordered and intended to prevent was permitted by his astounding incapacity. Oh! for two hours of Reno, or Kearney, or Reynolds, or Hancock, or old Sumner, instead of a whole day of this man, who could neither see the great need nor his own glorious opportunity."

Let us hear another author on this vitally important point: "It is now necessary to look to the other end of the Union line held by the Ninth Corps under Burnside. This force lay massed behind the heights on the east bank of the Antietam, and opposite the Confederate right, which it was designed he

should assail after forcing the passage of the Antietam by the lower stone-bridge. The part assigned to General Burnside was of the greatest importance, for a successful attack by him upon the Confederate right would, by carrying the Sharpsburg crest, force Lee from his line of retreat by way of Shepherdstown. General McClellan, appreciating the full effect of an attack by his left, directed Burnside early in the morning to hold his troops in readiness to assault the bridge in his front. Then, at 8 o'clock, on learning how much opposition had been developed by Hooker, he ordered Burnside to carry the bridge, gain possession of the heights, and advance along their crest upon Sharpsburg, as a diversion in favor of the right. Burnside's tentatives were frivolous in their character; and hour after hour went by, during which the need of his assistance became more and more imperative, and McClellan's commands more and more urgent. Five hours, in fact, passed, and the action on the right had been concluded in such manner as has been seen, before the work that should have been done in the morning had been accomplished. Encouraged by the ease with which the left of the Union force was held in check, Lee was free to remove two-thirds of the right wing under Longstreet,—namely, the divisions of McLaws and Walker,—and this force he applied at the point of actual conflict on his left, where, as has already been seen, the arrival of these divisions served to check Sumner in his career of victory, and hurl back Sedgwick. This step the Confederate commander would never have ventured on, had there been any vigor displayed on the part of the confronting force on his right; yet this heavy detachment, having been made from the hostile right, should have rendered the task assigned to General Burnside one of comparative ease, for it left on that entire wing but a single hostile division of 2,500 men under General Jones, and the force actually present to dispute the passage of the bridge did not exceed 400 men. Nevertheless, it was one o'clock, and after the action on the right had been determined, before a passage was effected; and this being done, two hours passed before the attack on the crest was made. This was successfully executed at three o'clock, the

Sharpsburg bridge being carried and a Confederate battery, that had been delivering an annoying fire, captured. It was one of the many unfortunate results of the long delay in this operation on the left that just as this success was gained the division of A. P. Hill, which Jackson had left behind to receive the surrender of Harper's Ferry, reached the field from that place by way of Shepherdstown. Uniting his own reinforcement with the troops of Jones that had been broken through the attack, he assumed the offensive, recaptured the battery, and drove Burnside back over all the ground gained, and to the shelter of the bluff bordering the Antietam." [5]

Colonel Powell points out four circumstances which conspired to rob McClellan of a decisive and glorious victory, and shows that if any one of them had transpired as the General intended, the destruction of Lee's army would have been secured.

First. Burnside was ordered to pursue Lee after the struggle at South Mountain. He failed to do so, and the failure was discovered too late. If he had followed up actively, Lee's own division of the army would have been overwhelmed before Jackson, McLaws, and Walker, who did the greater part of the fighting at Antietam, could have joined it, for he would then have had no opportunity to secure "an exceedingly strong position, probably the strongest in that section of the country."

Second. If General Burnside had attacked promptly and energetically at 8 or 9, or even at 10, instead of spending at least three hours in futile attempts to do what was subsequently accomplished in from ten to fifteen minutes, he would have found that there was only a trivial force in front of him; and, having swept this away and fallen upon the enemy's right flank and rear, there can be no doubt that he would have gained a decisive victory, as he might also have done if, when he did at last cross, he had rushed on swiftly instead of delaying for two hours, making his full delay amount to from five to seven hours.

Third. If Mansfield had advanced with Hooker, as Gen-

[5] Swinton, *Army of the Potomac*, 219, 221.

eral McClellan had ordered, success would have attended the Union arms early in the day, despite the fact that because of Burnside's failure the Rebels were massing their fighting strength against Hooker, for Hooker had actually turned the Rebel left, but the absence of Mansfield left a gap and Hooker was forced to retire.

Fourth. If General A. A. Humphreys had been at Antietam with his troops, he could have broken Lee's center when it was thinned to resist Hooker. But by orders from Washington he was detained a day (the 17th) at Fredericksburg, and so was not present at the battle.

But there is a fifth,—namely, Burnside's failure to clear away Garland's little force at South Mountain.

It was most unfortunate for General McClellan that he ever met Burnside. His kindness to Burnside when the latter was in the sorest need in Cincinnati will be remembered. Having been rescued from destitution and made comfortable and happy by the friendship of McClellan, a man of nobler character would have felt to the last moment of his life the warmest glow of gratitude. I surmise that Burnside's feelings were of jealousy rather than of gratitude. When directed to reinforce McClellan on the James he halted at Fortress Monroe and requested a secret conference with Mr. Stanton. Even cipher telegrams were not secure enough for him. This leads me to suspect him, especially as his army never got any farther. If there was any evidence that he urged the civil authorities to support McClellan, it would be gratifying to learn of it, but no hint of such action appears. There is no basis for believing that he ever played the rôle of the faithful friend. Having been reinstated after Pope's defeat, McClellan found Burnside one of his lieutenants; he favored him, trusted him, relied upon him constantly. Burnside was placed in a position to win glory at South Mountain; he won none, but lost a good opportunity in failing to follow up the rout of Garland's Brigade, in failing to obey McClellan's command to pursue after the Confederates had abandoned the field. But his crowning act of delinquency and faithlessness was at Antietam, as we have seen. If Porter or Franklin or Meade or

Sykes had had charge of the left wing, how different the tale would have been.

Writers descant upon the disparity of numbers at Antietam; but whoever studies the battle will find that, eliminating the feeble and worthless movement of Burnside, the battle of Antietam was a struggle of all the best fighting material of the Confederate army concentrated upon their left wing against the troops of Hooker, Mansfield, and Sumner. And the disparity at first asserted in order to lessen the credit disappears in the light of better information.

At 5 P. M. Lee concentrated his artillery upon the Union right, intending to advance, turn that wing of the Federal army, and force McClellan to retire toward Harper's Ferry, leaving the whole North open to him. A terrible artillery duel ensued, but the superior efficiency of McClellan's guns was quickly evident, and the design was abandoned. Jackson says, "I found his numerous artillery so judiciously placed as to render it inexpedient to hazard the attempt."

In waiting for fresh troops the 18th passed away, and that night saw the soldiers of Dixie hurrying back into Virginia. The sanguinary fight was over; and the army, not yet recovered from its reverses under Pope, now learned again that it could hold its own under competent leaders.

Some critics blame McClellan for not resuming the attack on the 18th, but his action was dictated by the wisest prudence. Probably none who censure would have done differently, had they been in McClellan's position. The question is not whether we now believe he would have probably succeeded, but whether, considering the condition of his army, it was prudent to make the attempt. With powerful enemies at the head of the government seeking his ruin, with soldiers not yet restored to their full spirit and efficiency, it behooved him to be prudent, for defeat would have been fraught with results appalling to the country as well as to himself. Surely the road of prudence was in this instance also the highway of wisdom. General Meade followed the same wise course at Gettysburg.

Upon the question of resuming the battle on the 18th

McClellan speaks convincingly: "The night brought with it grave responsibilities. Whether to renew the attack on the 18th, or to defer it, even with the risk of the enemy's retirement, was the question before me. After a night of anxious deliberation and a full and careful survey of the situation and condition of our army, and the strength and position of the enemy, I concluded that the success of an attack on the 18th was not certain. I am aware of the fact, that under ordinary circumstances, a general is expected to risk a battle if he has a reasonable prospect of success; but at this critical juncture I should have had a narrow view of the condition of the country, had I been willing to hazard another battle with less than an absolute assurance of success. At that moment,—Virginia lost, Washington menaced, Maryland invaded,—the national cause could afford no risk of defeat. One battle lost, and almost all would have been lost. Lee's army might then have marched as it pleased on Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, or New York. It could have levied its supplies from a fertile and devastated country; extorted tribute from wealthy and populous cities, and nowhere east of the Alleghenies was there another force able to arrest its march. The following are among the considerations which led me to doubt the certainty of success in attacking before the 19th:

"The troops were greatly overcome by the fatigue and exhaustion attendant upon the long-continued and severely contested battle of the 17th, together with the long day-and-night marches to which they had been subjected during the previous three days.

"The supply trains were in the rear, and many of the troops had suffered from hunger. They required rest and refreshment.

"One division of Sumner's and all of Hooker's corps on the right had, after fighting most valiantly for several hours, been overpowered by numbers, driven back in great disorder, and much scattered, so that they were for the time somewhat demoralized.

"In Hooker's corps, according to the return made by General Meade commanding, there were but 6,729 men present

on the 18th; whereas on the morning of the 22d there were 13,093 men present for duty in the same corps, showing that previous to and during the battle 6,364 men were separated from their command." [6]

There was some effort at pursuit by Porter's corps, but the Potomac lay between the two armies and afforded so much advantage to the Confederates that the attempt to harass them further was soon abandoned.

The army needed rest, reorganization, reequipment. Of the end of the campaign General Franklin writes: "History will one day tell why the Confederate army was not driven into the Potomac instead of across it. It will show that its escape was not due to want of generalship of the commanding general, nor to the absence of necessary orders to subordinates."

The losses at Antietam were: Union, 12,410; Confederate, 25,899. The forces engaged were: Lee, 179 regiments of infantry, 14½ regiments of cavalry, and 71 batteries; McClellan, 184 regiments of infantry, 15 regiments of cavalry, and 50 batteries.

Twenty-one regiments of the above 184 were raw recruits, and 27 others were in Franklin's corps, with 7 of the 50 batteries, and did not arrive until between noon and one o'clock, while the battle, it will be remembered, began on the afternoon of the 16th and was resumed at daylight on the 17th. The above figures are taken from Captain Heipinger's *Antietam* and will be a surprise to those who have believed from false statements that McClellan had an overwhelming superiority of force.

General Upton tells us that at this time there were 71,210 men at Washington, and that "50,000 of these could have been at Antietam, and if they had been, it is fair to infer that little would have been heard of the Confederacy after the Maryland campaign." [7]

The repulse of the army of invasion was not a rout of it. If Burnside had not failed and the Southern army had been

[6] McClellan, *Own Story*, 618, 619.

[7] *Military Policy of the United States*, 383.

overwhelmed, naturally a pursuit would have followed. But Burnside's defection caused the Union army too great a sacrifice of men to leave any keen spirit of fight in it. Lee's purpose was foiled. The North was saved. Surely, thought they, that was enough to expect of this army, considering its recent experiences. It came wearied to Antietam. It was more weary now. It needed a long rest after Bull Run. It needed that rest still more now. All the army needed reorganizing—many of the soldiers were raw recruits, novices in drill and discipline. Above all, because of the calamity of Bull Run No. 2, the army needed to be reequipped. It was woefully destitute of the necessaries of life.

CHAPTER LXV

REORGANIZATION OF THE ARMY—ILLUSIVE PROMISES—THE CONSPIRACY IN FULL BLAST

With the invasion of Maryland, an emergency arose which had to be met instantly; no choice of action was left. Ready or not ready, organized or not, fit or unfit, the army had to start out at once to block the advance of Lee into the North. But for this condition, the army should have had a couple of months' rest (as it had before Gettysburg) to restore its nerve, to revive its morale. General McClellan makes all this clear, as we have shown.

Accordingly, the army was now gathered about the vicinity of Harper's Ferry, and requisitions for clothes, camp utensils, and so on were hurried to Washington. As the articles came slowly and in insufficient quantity, General McClellan kept urging the authorities to hasten, and they in turn insisted that the orders had been filled, which was literally true but meant nothing, as a large portion had not yet arrived. It speaks badly for the administrative functions of the commissary general's office that, weeks later, train loads of these supplies were found on the tracks in Washington—forgotten. The waiting was no damage in itself, as the troops needed the rest. Then also, as Mr. Swinton observes, while the Potomac was low there was danger that Lee would cross again and hurry into the North; but the season of high water was now near, and when it came this danger would pass. This McClellan had in view.[1]

For a few days after Antietam the powers seemed grateful; and then, without any earnest inquiry as to the facts and the necessities of the situation, the goading to move on was resumed. On the first of October, 1862, the President came

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 643.

to Harper's Ferry. He was most affable, and he repeatedly assured McClellan that he was satisfied with his whole course from the beginning; that the only fault that he could possibly find was that he was perhaps too careful about being sure that everything was ready before acting, but that his actions were all right when he started. McClellan replied that he thought a few experiments with those who started before they were ready would probably convince the President that in the end he consumed less time than they. Mr. Lincoln said that he regarded McClellan as the only general in the service capable of organizing and commanding a large army, and that he would stand by him. At South Mountain he said he did not see how Lee had gained that field, and that he was sure that if McClellan had defended it Lee could not have taken it. He again said that he would stand by the general, that he wished him to continue his preparations and not to stir an inch until he was ready. He again said that he was fully satisfied with McClellan; that the General should be let alone, and that he would stand by him. They never met again.[2] It is hard to believe that in saying this the President was absolutely insincere. I prefer to believe that he was expressing his actual feelings, but, taking that view, it is almost as painful to observe how completely he must have been in the sinister power of the Secretary of War.

He had scarcely reached the Capital again when an order came removing General Cox's division, 5,000 men, from McClellan's command; and on the heels of that order came the following telegram: "Oct. 6.—I am instructed to telegraph you as follows: The President directs that you cross the Potomac and give battle to the enemy and drive him south. Your army must move now while the roads are good. If you cross the river between the enemy and Washington, and cover the latter by your operations, you can be reinforced with 30,000 men. If you move up the valley of the Shenandoah, not more than 12,000 or 15,000 can be sent to you. The President advises the interior line between Washington and the enemy, but does not order it. He is very desirous that your

[2] McClellan, *Own Story*, 627, 628.

army move as soon as possible. You will immediately report what line you adopt and when you intend to cross the river; also to what point the reinforcements are to be sent. It is necessary that the plan of your operations be positively determined on before orders are given for building bridges and repairing railroads. I am directed to add that the Secretary of War and the General-in-Chief fully concur with the President in these instructions." [3]

Upon the receipt of this peculiar order, after such emphatic assurances from the President of his appreciation of the existing condition and of his hearty support, General McClellan pressed his own officers to urge to the utmost speed all those from whom the supplies had to be obtained. In spite of every effort, General Franklin's corps was not supplied until the army had started off into Virginia at the end of October. General Reynolds was detained a day at Berlin for a similar reason, and General Porter completed his equipment only as he was about to cross the Potomac. Many soldiers marched to Warrenton with bare and bleeding feet.[4]

In his *Own Story,* General McClellan, as we might expect from one with his wonderful talent for administrative work and detail, presents overwhelming proof of the necessity for the reequipment of the army. He also shows the inexcusable negligence and incapacity of the authorities in complying with the requisitions. Those who find such matters interesting should read pages 633 and 635 of his *Own Story,* where tables are given showing exactly how many caps and other specific articles of clothing were supplied, when they were supplied, and the constant efforts that were made to quicken the movements of the Washington authorities from whom these necessaries were to be secured. Mr. Flower tells us that, as the result of the reinstatement of General McClellan, Mr. Lincoln, knowing how distasteful it was to the Secretary of War, kept away from the War Department for a month. There is extrinsic evidence of this in the fact that until the beginning of October General McClellan had a respite from annoyance.

[3] McClellan, *Own Story,* 628.
[4] Curtis, *McClellan's Last Service,* 82.

But just at the very time when he had received the warmest and most earnest assurances of the cordial cooperation of the President, and the prospect seemed very hopeful, the proofs came flooding upon him that Svengali had reappeared upon the scene, for the President's communications became suddenly and without cause bitter, unreasonable, senseless. There was urgent need of horses. There was a scanty supply, and of those on hand a very large number were incapacitated by a strange disease that was caused no doubt by overwork. An allusion to this brought forth the following Stanton-inspired response, written without the slightest knowledge of the facts, and without effort to ascertain them.[5]

"To MAJ.-GEN. McCLELLAN:

"I have just received your despatch about sore-tongued and fatigued horses. Will you pardon me for asking what the horses of your army have done since the battle of Antietam that fatigues anything?

"A. LINCOLN."

Such a caustic, undignified letter, so out of accord with the generally accepted idea of the patience, wisdom, and kindness of the President, makes one not only marvel, but also look for the malign inspiration which produced it. And we seem to find it in the fact that Mr. Stanton was again the private counsellor of the President.

In reply, McClellan pointed out the arduous work of the cavalry in making reconnoissances, in scouting and picketing, and in pursuing Stuart's cavalry. He concludes by saying: "If any instance can be found where overworked cavalry has performed more labor than mine since the battle of Antietam, I am not conscious of it."

[5] McClellan, *Own Story*, 634.

CHAPTER LXVI

A SWIFT MARCH—THE REBELS ASTONISHED—LEE IN DANGER—THE CLOSING SCENE—THE TRIUMPH OF THE CONSPIRACY

On the 26th of October, 1862, the crossing of the Potomac began, and was delayed by heavy rains.

Once over the river and supplied as far as could be expected at that time, the army pushed ahead vigorously. Jefferson Davis expressed his surprise at the speed of it. On the 7th of November the army was massed at and about Warrenton. Lee and Longstreet, with half the Rebel army, were at Culpeper, only six miles away from McClellan's advance guard. Jackson, with the other half, was beyond the Blue Ridge, at least 125 miles away. Mr. Swinton speaks of this movement with warm praise. "Advancing due southward toward Warrenton, he masked the movement by guarding the passes of the Blue Ridge, and by threatening to issue through these, he compelled Lee to retain Jackson in the valley. With such success was this movement managed that on reaching Warrenton on the 9th, while Lee had sent half of his army forward to Culpeper to oppose McClellan's advance in that direction, the other half was still west of the Blue Ridge, scattered up and down the valley, and separated from the other moiety by at least two days' march. McClellan's next projected move was to strike across obliquely westward and interpose between the severed divisions of the Confederate forces." [1]

From another authority we learn that Jackson was at Winchester, one hundred and twenty-five miles away, with half of the Rebel forces. General McClellan's advance force was but six miles from Longstreet. An engagement bringing

[1] Swinton, *Army of the Potomac*, 226, 227.

glory to the Union cause was impending. The sun of good fortune was again beaming upon McClellan. The army was never more fit for a great fight. And as it was full of love for him, and of confidence in him, there was no doubt in his mind of success against the divided armies of Dixie, if those far behind did not prevent. Colonel Dodge tells us that "there was good ground for thinking the prospect brighter than ever before." [2]

The Confederate forces were split in twain. Jackson was at Winchester, 125 miles away, and all the available gaps of the Blue Ridge by which Jackson might otherwise join Lee,—namely, Snicker's, Ashby's, Chester, and Thornton's,—were all "corked up" and held in strong force, so that Jackson could bring no aid to Lee for the approaching battle.

Lee was therefore isolated, and the preponderance of McClellan's forces left no doubt as to the result of the coming battle. McClellan had 268 regiments of infantry, 18 regiments of cavalry, and 73 batteries; while Lee had only 89½ regiments of infantry, 15 regiments of cavalry, and 45 batteries.

This made the proportions of the two armies about 3 to 1, and left no doubt that McClellan would overwhelm Lee's weakened force.

Jackson had at Winchester 91 regiments of infantry, 3 regiments and 2 battalions of cavalry, and 23 batteries.

The peril to his army was so imminent, the chance of escape so slight, that it is said Lee for the only time in the war was bewildered. And his despatches of November the 7th, the 8th, and the 9th seem to show that he was.

It will be seen, therefore, that there was every likelihood that McClellan's now powerful army, confident of its leader and full of courage because of that confidence, would quickly fall with irresistible force on the isolated half of the Rebel army under Lee. A complete Union victory was promised by every existing condition. Nothing more desirable than the broad wall between the two parts of the Confederate forces can be imagined. Yet it was made a pretext for Mc-

[2] *Bird's-eye View*, 109.

Clellan's removal, and we are earnestly and gravely assured by one of the President's biographers that he had determined that if McClellan should permit Lee to cross the Blue Ridge and place himself between Richmond and the Army of the Potomac (a movement to be prayed for, not prevented) he would remove him from command. The folly of such a resolution,—oblivious as Lincoln must have been of the advantage to the Union of the very movement which he decided in advance would be a calamity,—is too evident to warrant any commentary. Another story reflects almost equally upon the capacity of the President to judge properly of the military situation at this time and of the favorable opportunity presented for a great Union victory. Some one said to him, "What do you think of your general now?" The President replied: "We had a game when I was a boy called 'Three Times Round and Out.' Stuart has been round the Union army a second time, and if he goes around again, it will be three times around and out for General McClellan." Still another tale: When Mr. Stanton heard that Lee and Longstreet were at Culpeper, he asked the oft repeated question: "Well, what do you think of your general now?" "As you do," was the President's astonishing response. And it is said that an undated order was issued at once for McClellan's removal.

But it is more probable that as soon as the danger of an invasion of the North passed over it was determined to put Burnside in command. When McClellan was reinstated, it was merely for the moment and to meet an exigency. It may be surmised that when Burnside refused the command, just after the defeat of Pope, it was understood that the offer would be repeated and not declined; and it was rumored later that the echoes of the fierce cannonading at Antietam had hardly died away when an undated order was issued relieving McClellan and Porter and putting Burnside and Hooker in their places.

Regardless of the ingratitude and injustice shown to McClellan, no more unfit selection could possibly have been made. It betrayed absolute ignorance or disregard of Burnside's derelictions at South Mountain and Antietam. It was like

a reward for gross incompetency. Why was not the plan carried out at the time indicated? Because the state elections were near, and its effect upon them was dreaded. This is made evident from the fact that the moment the elections were over the infamy was perpetrated.

In view of his recent successes, of the condition and spirits of his army, of the situation of the enemy, and of the apparent certainty of victory, the heart of General McClellan would naturally have been filled with pleasing anticipations as he sat in his tent, late on the evening of that 7th of November, writing to his wife. His constant faithfulness in this occupation throughout his military career marks the man, and his letters so fully reveal his thoughts and feelings that they serve as an impenetrable shield against the malice of his enemies. The letter of that night has no trace of joy because of the apparently bright prospects before him. The gloom of the actual situation was upon him, for, though the letter says nothing of it, he had learned that General Buckingham had arrived that day from Washington on a special train. The train had stopped a short distance from the commander's camp, and without paying his respects to the commander, Buckingham had gone several miles at once through a heavy snow storm to General Burnside's camp. McClellan instantly knew what this meant. He was to be superseded. But the consummation of the purpose was long delayed, and it was late that night as he sat still writing when a knock was heard. Invited to enter, in came Burnside and Buckingham; and after a few minutes of pleasant conversation General Buckingham handed to General McClellan these two orders.[3]

"HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,
"WASHINGTON, Nov. 5, 1862.

"MAJ.-GEN. McCLELLAN, Commanding, etc.:

"GENERAL: On receipt of the order of the President, sent herewith, you will immediately turn over your command to Maj.-Gen. Burnside, and repair to Trenton, N. J., reporting

[3] McClellan, *Own Story*, 651, 652.

on your arrival at that place, by telegraph, for further orders.

"Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

"H. W. HALLECK,
"Gen.-in-Chief."

"General Orders, No. 182.

"WAR DEPARTMENT,
"ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,
"WASHINGTON, Nov. 5, 1862.

"By direction of the President of the United States, it is ordered that Maj.-Gen. McClellan be relieved from the command of the Army of the Potomac, and that Maj.-Gen. Burnside take the command of that army.

"By order of the Secretary of War,

"E. D. TOWNSEND,
"Assist. Adj.-Gen."

After the death of General Halleck the following order was found by his widow:[4]

"EXECUTIVE MANSION, WASHINGTON, 186 .

"By direction of the President, it is ordered that Maj.-Gen. McClellan be relieved from the command of the Army of the Potomac, and that Maj.-Gen. Burnside take the command of that army. Also, that Maj.-Gen. Hunter take command of the corps in said army which is now commanded by Gen. Burnside.

"That Maj.-Gen. Fitz-John Porter be relieved from the command of the corps he now commands in said army, and that Maj.-Gen. Hooker take command of said corps.

"The General-in-Chief is authorized, in his discretion, to issue an order substantially as above, forthwith or so soon as he may deem proper.

"A. LINCOLN."

"Nov. 5, 1862."

This last order is probably the one first referred to. The absence of a date at the head of it together with the report

[4] McClellan, *Own Story*, 650, 651.

leads one to surmise that the date at the end was not inserted when the order was issued, but later. If it was issued when the others were, why was it issued at all? Was there any special reason for selecting the 5th of November? There was. It was the day after the elections, and there would not be another election for two years. The reason which forbade similar action directly after the retreat of Lee into Virginia no longer existed.

There is a circumstance which unmistakably stamps the animus of the removal. McClellan was a very useful man to the cause of the Union, even if one is willing to believe that he lacked some quality of a great leader. It may be clearly gathered, even from the works of hostile critics, that he was a great organizer and that he had a rare faculty of instilling courage into men. Yet for two years and a half the country was robbed of his services. So it was not merely to seek a leader thought to be more aggressive that he was removed; it was to get rid of him altogether, and this shows the malice and bad faith of the removal. The action was not military, it was political and personal; it sprang out of the hatred of Edwin M. Stanton.

CHAPTER LXVII

SHOULD HE HAVE RESISTED?

If in the midst of a battle conducted upon plans fully known only to himself a general should receive an order relieving him from command, and if he should be aware that the conditions were unknown to his superiors, the necessity of the situation would justify his disregarding the order and finishing what he had begun. If McClellan had attacked and destroyed Lee's army, or if he had merely driven it back, the revival of hope throughout the country, the delight at his success, would have been so great that the conspirators would not have dared to persecute him. The same principle which he applied in the Maryland campaign he should have applied once more here. For the good of the country, he assumed command and won the battles of Crampton's Gap, South Mountain, and Antietam. If he had failed, they would have hanged him. As he succeeded, they dared not touch him. The interests of the National cause now required that he should complete the movement he had begun; and so the reasons for such action were not essentially different from those which led him to ignore Halleck's repeated statement that his command was confined to Washington [1] and march against Lee. That was an example of the highest and wisest patriotism. Here was another occasion for the protection of the public good in a similar way. Insubordination is, generally speaking, reprehensible. But insubordination sometimes becomes a duty and is laudable. If McClellan had ignored Halleck and captured Richmond on the 14th of August, as he could have done and as he wished to do, the Administration would have unwillingly joined in the country's applause. The

[1] McClellan, *Own Story*, 548.

Declaration of Independence of the American Colonies was an act of insubordination of the highest order.

It is interesting to me, and I trust to the reader, to conjecture what a more primitive man would have done in McClellan's place,—one who fully appreciated the weakness and the timidity of the civilian authorities and the extent to which they were endangering the existence of the nation in order to further their personal ambitions. There was an excellent reason for resistance. Hostilities had actually begun.

A Cromwell would probably have arrested both Buckingham and Burnside, would have had the orders sealed without reading them, and, keeping both officers in detention, would have tranquilly pursued his campaign. A Napoleon would have had a subtler program arranged. He would doubtless have arrested both generals at Burnside's camp; he would have prevented them from getting near him personally, and he would have forced them to trust the orders to a member of his staff; the papers would never have reached him, and the officer who received them and read them would have of his own volition put both Buckingham and Burnside under arrest, though he would have failed to communicate the fact to the commander.

A victory being won, the amazed conspirators would at once have flown to cover by joining in the nation's plaudits. They would have revoked the orders, destroyed all evidence of them, and sought McClellan's friendship. Then he would have discovered the plight of his dear friends Buckingham and Burnside, he would have been most profuse in his apologies and expressions of regret, and he would have threatened to punish the officious underling, who of course would have been missing. We are told that Stanton had the possibility of resistance in mind, and feared it. General Buckingham says that the Secretary expressed some fear that McClellan would not give up the command.

General McClellan never entertained the thought of resistance; yet the feelings of the army invited and encouraged it. There is no question that the army as a body would have

stood with him in ignoring Stanton's command or even in punishing Stanton, if he had so desired.

The manner of the removal betrays a malign motive. The courteous method would have been for General Buckingham to go directly to McClellan and permit him to make all the necessary arrangements for the substitution of commanders. To come into McClellan's camp and spend hours with Burnside before waiting upon the commander gave the whole matter the air of a conspiracy. Undoubtedly General Buckingham followed his instructions.

CHAPTER LXVIII

THE DISMISSAL CONDEMNED

Misled by Stanton's machinations, many writers have fancied that McClellan was open to censure at certain points of his military career, when in fact he was not only blameless but praiseworthy; yet even such writers, almost without exception, have had sufficient discernment and honesty to express disapproval of McClellan's removal and to characterize it as an act detrimental to the National cause.

The verdict of his friends is far more strongly stated, and should be presented here.

The picture which Colonel Powell gives of the end of General McClellan's military career is vivid and interesting. "Upon arriving at Warrenton, officers and men were in joyous spirits and General McClellan says in his final report: 'I doubt whether during the whole period that I had the honor of commanding the Army of the Potomac, it was in such excellent condition to fight a great battle.' But like a bolt from an unclouded sky came the intelligence that Generals McClellan and Porter had both been relieved of their commands. Why, was the question on every lip? Some believed but many doubted the report. Chase in his diary of September 7th mentions Burnside as Chief. Had such a promise been made to Mr. Chase? It certainly has that appearance. Why was not Burnside given command of the Maryland campaign? The answer is, because even though it may have been promised, his foes in power did not dare to take the risk at that critical period. There was only one man in whom the President had the confidence to entrust the protection of the Capital in this emergency. That man was George B. McClellan and he sought him."

The Administration was not content with the removal of McClellan. General Porter was also removed, because he was McClellan's right-hand man, as Jackson was Lee's. "McClellan's parting letter was read Nov. 10th to the troops who were at Warrenton along the Alexandria and Warrenton turnpike. Cheer after cheer was spontaneously given by the different organizations. The regulars were silent, but some of them wept. What would have been the result, we ask, with such an army at his back had he chosen to have rebelled against the powers at Washington? The army was being bereft of a man who was to it the embodiment of loyalty; one who possessed all the traits which rendered him beloved by his officers as well as by the rank and file. His nobility of character, his kindness and solicitude for the welfare of his men as a father, his unflinching courage as a soldier, in the face of his enemies whether political or military could not help endearing him to the army which he undoubtedly created. No desolate widow, no fatherless child, no despairing sister can point to the grave of a needless sacrifice you caused or with justice raise a pitying appeal to Heaven for vengeance."

If through some gross blunder of General McClellan, Lee had annihilated the Army of the Potomac at Antietam and had ravaged the North, the dismissal of McClellan could have hardly been more curt and contemptuous than it was.

When the special train was about to start away on the return to Washington a crowd of soldiers uncoupled the general's car and ran it for some distance. If he had but lifted a finger to sanction it, they would have held the train and Buckingham, too, until the impending battle was over. Another author, speaking of the farewell, says:

"Every heart of the 30,000 men was filled with love and grief; every voice was raised in shouts expressing at once sorrow, devotion, and indignation, and when the chief had passed out of sight the romance of war was over for the Army of the Potomac. No other commander ever aroused the same enthusiasm in the troops, whether in degree or kind. The soldiers fairly idolized him and were never tired of look-

ing at him. The sight of him would bring cheers spontaneously from every lip. His voice was music to every ear. . . . How sweet to him as he passed up the road in his banishment and under disgrace were the cheers of those 30,000 comrades rising and swelling upon the air. Himself the very soul of manly gentleness, courtesy, and kindness, the acclaim which drowned even the roar of the artillery and which followed him far out of sight was a farewell which no heart could more appreciate or more fondly cherish." [1]

At the time of the removal one of two things was certain: either that Lee's inferior force would be defeated or that, to escape the unequal conflict Lee would retire to Gordonsville, leaving the way to Richmond open. But a battle was probably inevitable.

Under such circumstances, why should this general who had always met Lee with credit to the Union cause be removed? Most of the reasons given are too trivial and puerile to be seriously discussed. Some believe "that the Administration feared that McClellan, if left a few weeks longer, would crush Lee, annihilate his army, and end the rebellion, leaving slavery intact; and they preferred that the war continue rather than that it should end with the cause of it left over to disturb the country in future." "There is no proof that this was the motive," says Mr. Elson; "but if it were so we cannot hesitate to give it our approval." This expression indicates the fanaticism of the radical faction. However, he admits "that from a military standpoint the removal of McClellan was a serious mistake." [2] "But those in power decreed that at least the war must go on until the effect of the emancipation proclamation could be known." [3]

This view is corroborated by the immediate abandonment by General Burnside, with the sanction of the Administration, of the advantage gained, and the retreat of a large Union army from a small Rebel army, to be followed a little later by an ignominious defeat.

[1] Cole, *Under Five Commanders*, 98, 99.
[2] Elson, *History of the United States*, 711.
[3] Curtis, *McClellan's Last Service*, 127.

Here for the second time the Government directly intervened and pulled the army away from an impending triumph, as if to prevent the ending of the war; and politics prevailed over patriotism once more.

CHAPTER LXIX

RESULT OF THE DISMISSAL

Gloom and discouragement filled the army, and desertions ran into hundreds daily. The soldiers, knowing Burnside's failure at South Mountain and Antietam, had no confidence in him. He immediately proved that their distrust was not unfounded by staying the advance upon Lee and retiring eastward toward Fredericksburg, where, being followed up by the Rebels thus allowed to unite, he delayed attack until they had secured the most invulnerable position in the neighborhood with one hundred thousand men to defend it, and then he assaulted the position and was repulsed with terrific slaughter. This was the battle of Fredericksburg. A clamor arose for the restoration of McClellan, but Stanton gave no heed to it. Up to this time there had been no difficulty in getting volunteers, but patriotism was chilled by the conduct of the Administration. Enlistments stopped and soldiers could be secured only by being drafted.

The Army of the Potomac was on the point of revolt. Winner, a famous song writer of the period, composed a song about this time entitled "Give Us Back Our Old Commander." This song became so popular in the Army of the Potomac and was so enthusiastically sung by the soldiers that the Government suppressed both the singing and the song, and imprisoned the composer; and no copy of it can now be found anywhere, except in the Library of Congress. The various collections of Civil War songs do not mention it.

The first stanza ran as follows:

"Give us back our old Commander, Little Mac, the people's pride,
Let the army and the nation in their choice be satisfied.
With McClellan as our leader, let us strike the blow anew,
Give us back our old Commander, he will see the battle through."

Hooker succeeded Burnside; but Burnside was not sent home as McClellan was. He was still utilized, as McClellan should have been. Then in the spring came the battle of Chancellorsville, where 65,000 Rebels overmatched 130,000 Union men. Again the cry for McClellan rang over the land. But Stanton pointed out to the President that this was a clear proof of the political prestige of McClellan and of the peril of giving him a chance to achieve military renown.

Meade succeeded Hooker, but Hooker was not sent home on this account. He was utilized to the utmost; idleness was enforced only on McClellan. Two months after Chancellorsville came Gettysburg, July 1-2-3, 1863. Here Lee, less cautious than at Antietam, attacked the Union army well placed and entrenched, and the result was a repulse and an unpursued retreat.

From Antietam to Culpeper was less than two months, and McClellan was close to the foe and about to strike. Nothing of importance occurred between the battle of Gettysburg on the first three days of July, 1863, and the battle of the Wilderness, ten months later, in May, 1864; yet Meade retained his place until the end of the war.

In March, 1864, General Grant became Commander-in-Chief of all the armies of the nation. He was given full discretion, and supplied with all the troops he wanted. He was not asked to reveal his plans. He took the field; yet this was not, as in McClellan's case, made an excuse for relieving him of the chief command. General Grant's plan was attrition. The greater will in time consume the less. "I propose to fight it out on this line, if it takes all summer," he announced; but it took more than all summer. It lasted eleven and one half months,—from May the 4th, 1864, to April, 1865,—and was attended by a fearful cost in men and money.

The Administration persuaded many people that the National capital was in danger when the Army of the Potomac under McClellan was on the James; that it was necessary for that army to be placed between Lee and Washington. But when General Grant "tried out" the overland route for

which Mr. Stanton clamored, and lost 20,000 men in the first three days' march and in all that year 88,389 men, and established his base like McClellan on the south bank of the James, twenty miles below Richmond, not between Washington on one hand and Lee or Richmond on the other, not a word of complaint was uttered either by the President or his "Great War Secretary"; nor was ever the slightest hint given that "he must act" during all that long halt from June, 1864, to April, 1865, though now there was a ground of fear. There was now no force at all save Sigel's small command between Washington and Richmond; and Richmond was not menaced by the Army on the James. The Army of the Potomac was well nigh annihilated by its losses. "So gloomy was the military outlook after the action on the Chickahominy, and to such a degree by consequence had the moral spring of the public mind become relaxed, that there was at this time great danger of a collapse of the war. The history of this conflict truthfully written will show this. Had not success elsewhere come to brighten the horizon, it would have been difficult to raise new forces to recruit the Army of the Potomac, which, shaken in its structure, its valor quenched in blood, and thousands of its ablest officers killed and wounded, was the Army of the Potomac no more." [1]

As a result, the struggle for the Union was at this time woefully near an end. As if to demonstrate how futile was the scheme of the overland route, now, when it was finally put into operation, Washington was at the mercy of the Rebels. Early was at its gates on the 12th of July, 1864; and it is admitted by all that he could have taken it at once, as it had been stripped of troops to reinforce General Grant, 40,000 men having been sent to him on his march, making, with the 169,000 at first given, in all over 209,000 men supplied for the campaign against a fighting force of 56,000.

Had the Administration given the same hearty and unlimited support to General McClellan that was given to General Grant, there can be no doubt that the Rebellion would have been crushed in 1862. The bloodshed of the three last

[1] Swinton, *Army of the Potomac*, 495.

years of the war, the slaughter of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg would have been saved, if McClellan had been treated like Grant. And why was he not? Did the battle of the Wilderness, where 20,000 Union men were slain, or the great host of dead that strewed the overland route to the James, inspire more confidence than Malvern Hill? To be justly chargeable with all that worse than needless loss of life is an appalling responsibility.

Through his unpatriotic hatred of McClellan, Stanton built two great pyramids, one of brave men's bones and the other of debt, all to satisfy his desire for revenge. And in trying to crush a political adversary he nearly wrecked the Union.

In the summer of 1864 the popular dissatisfaction was so great and the clamor for McClellan so general that if there had been a national power of recall at that time the administration would have been changed at once.

Through the failure of the Government to support McClellan the war was prolonged for three years, and as the result General Grant tells us the Confederacy came within a hair's breadth of being successful.[2]

The nation was on the verge of bankruptcy, and if Lee had united with Johnston as, by abandoning Richmond earlier, he could have done, any further struggle to coerce the South would have been probably futile. At the same time Hood's army of 60,000 veteran soldiers might have left General Thomas with his weak Union army in Nashville, invaded the North without any serious opposition, and terrorized the Government into acknowledging the Confederacy. Hood might have marched through Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and the North. He might have captured Washington on the way; or he might have joined Lee,—and later Johnston,—and overwhelmed Sherman first and Grant later. General Grant saw the possibilities which would naturally spring from Hood's aggressive action, and for a time was very anxious about it.

[2] *Around the World with General Grant*, II, 460.

CHAPTER LXX

A GREAT COMMANDER

Many lines of argument conspire to fortify and vindicate the eminent ability of General McClellan as a commander.

The first of these is the otherwise unaccountable amount of space and time given to McClellan's campaigns. If Mr. Stanton's view of them is well founded, General McClellan merely wasted the time of the Army of the Potomac, depleted its ranks, and poured out the money of the nation fruitlessly. The less said about such campaigns and such a leader the better; but no part of the Civil War has received anywhere near so much attention as that part in which McClellan figured. Not only is McClellan's military career given great prominence in the histories of the nation, in the general histories of the war, in the histories of the Army of the Potomac, and in the histories of sections of that army, but to no other campaigns of the war, however successful, have so many specific works been devoted. A partial list may be of interest: Webb's *The Peninsula;* McMahon's *Peninsular Campaign;* Barnard's *Peninsular Campaign;* Walker's *Second Army Corps;* Powell's *Fifth Army Corps;* Swinton's *Army of the Potomac;* French's *Army of the Potomac;* Stine's *Army of the Potomac;* DeJoinville's *Army of the Potomac;* Hilliard's *McClellan and His Campaigns;* McClellan's *Own Story;* Michie's *General McClellan;* Michie's *Life of General Emory Upton; Giants of the Republic;* Headley's *Great Rebellion;* General Humphreys' *Peninsular Campaign;* Cole's *Under Five Commanders;* General Naglee's *McClellan vs. Lincoln;* Curtis's *McClellan's Last Service to the Republic;* Captain Heysinger's *Antietam;* Palfrey's *The Antietam and Fredericksburg;* Upton's *Military Policy of the United States;* Ropes' *Story of*

the Civil War; Le Compte's *Guerre des Etats Unis;* Comte de Paris's *History of the Civil War; Battles and Leaders;* Nicolay and Hay's *Lincoln; History of the United States from 1850 to 1877,* by James Ford Rhodes; Abbott's *History of the Civil War;* Schmucker's *History of the Civil War;* Dodge's *Bird's-Eye View of the War;* Pollard's *Lost Cause;* Eggleston's *History of the War in the Confederate States;* Allen's *Civil War.*

This is far from being a complete list, but even as it stands no other list can be presented that gives as much importance to any other feature of that great struggle for national integrity. This extraordinary attention of itself makes a disinterested investigator suspect the good faith of Mr. Stanton and his faction in disparaging General McClellan, and in underrating his work. They do "protest too much, methinks."

There is another line of argument which seems to me conclusive in support of the claim that General McClellan was a great commander. It is this: many of the authors above mentioned give unstinted and unqualified praise to McClellan's military operations; others praise in part and with amazing inconsistency blame in part, though the praise is a flat contradiction of the blame; a very few others, probably and apparently from the virulence of politics at the time when they wrote, are absolutely blind to any merit in McClellan's military career. Nothing can illustrate better the intensity of the political fervor of the time than a comparison of General Swinton's *Army of the Potomac* with the political work which he published in 1864, or General Barnard's letters during the Peninsular Campaign with his later history of the campaign, or General Michie's *Life of General Upton* with General Michie's *Life of General McClellan.*

Any reader capable of analyzing can gather from the pages of the least friendly author abundant facts to refute the strictures made by that same author. The hostile and irritating attitude of the Administration; the premature beginning of military operations; the revocation of McClellan's authority when supreme control was, as was conceded in 1864, neces-

sary to success; the reduction by one-third of an army that was not anywhere near large enough at its full original strength, judging from the practical confessions of 1864; the false maps of the Warwick River; the lack of naval co-operation to capture Yorktown and clear the James promptly and the resulting delay; the enforced straddling of the Chickahominy and consequent dangerous extension of McClellan's line of entrenchment; the detention of the army for two months in miasmatic swamps awaiting the ever promised but never arriving McDowell's corps; the disheartening obstacles interposed by the severity of the weather; the stoppage of enlistments and resulting failure to keep up the strength of the army; the splendid fighting of the seven days in which there can be no question, even from the pages of the most biased political writer, that McClellan more than held his own against the greatest military genius of the South; the removal of the army from the James just after that display of generalship had made it obvious that with an increase of strength, which could have been easily supplied, the swift capture of Richmond was certain; the degrading position of McClellan during Pope's campaign, when the interest of the nation required that he should be sent to lead his men to the aid of General Pope; the defeat of Lee by Pope's disorganized mob at Antietam; and finally the permanent removal of McClellan on November the 7th, 1862, without cause, when the prospect of a successful attack on Lee's army was very bright,—all, or nearly all, these facts appear in the pages of the most adverse critics, and if any of them is omitted by one of these writers it is sure to be supplied by another, even though he be no more friendly. These facts properly weighed and considered, refute every adverse criticism, and supply the highest praise of General McClellan. That under such conditions he could have repeatedly met Robert E. Lee without discredit, and could have had at the close of his career a better army than ever before, is of itself the best encomium of his military capacity; and our admiration for his ability is greatly heightened when we compare his campaigns against

Lee with those of any other leader of the Army of the Potomac, especially as to the relative losses of the contending armies and their condition when the struggle was over.

But the most satisfying meed of praise comes not from indirect tributes to McClellan's genius but from the hearty endorsement of those most competent to judge.

By common consent, the foremost military genius of Europe in the 19th century was Von Moltke. Long after the war an American said to him: "Some of us in America do not esteem McClellan as highly as some of our other generals." "It may be so," retorted Von Moltke; "but let me tell you that if your government had supported General McClellan in the field as it should have done, your war would have been ended two years sooner than it was."

Upon a vote of all the military experts of to-day, among the leaders of the war Robert E. Lee would be awarded the first place; and if it had been left to General Lee to assign the order of military merit among the Federal leaders, General McClellan would undoubtedly stand first, with no one near him.

A distant relative of General Lee was eager to get his opinion of the skill of the various commanders who had been sent against him, and one day asked him, "Who in your opinion was the ablest Northern general of the war?" General Lee was not content to give an indifferent and hesitating expression of his judgment, but, doubtless having in mind the thoughtless or malicious criticisms of McClellan and wishing to resent them, he sprang from his chair and thumping his fist upon the table replied vehemently, "McClellan by all odds."

Nor was this a view developed after the war, as Mr. Rhodes seems to fancy. When the Southern army was passing into Maryland to invade the North a despatch was handed to General Lee. The reading of it cast an evident shadow upon his spirits, and General Longstreet asked anxiously, "What is the news?" "The worst in the world," was the reply; "McClellan is in command again." No finer eulogy

than this can be imagined, especially when it came in such a practical way. No one knows the prowess of a wrestler so well as he who has struggled with him. No swordsman from merely looking on knows the adroitness of a fencer half so well as he who has felt the touch of his steel. This gives General Lee's opinion of McClellan a tenfold value. He was not theorizing about McClellan. He had battled with him and measured his ability in actual combat.

In his article in *Battles and Leaders,* General Daniel H. Hill tells us that "as reunited Americans, we should be proud of both of our great commanders." He is referring to Lee and McClellan. In his opinion they were the two great leaders of the war.

Of the transfer of the Army of the Potomac to the James the President of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, expresses his opinion that "with the exception of the retreat of Moreau through the Black Forest, a retreat upon which more than any other act rests his great fame as a general, the operations of McClellan furnish the most magnificent example which modern history presents of the rescue of a great army from apparent ruin."

The high praise, direct and indirect, of Generals Johnston, Jackson, Imboden, and other Southern leaders has already been given.

Even adverse critics feel compelled to pay tribute to the genius of McClellan.

"There are strong grounds for believing that he was the best commander the Army of the Potomac ever had. . . . While the Confederacy was young, and fresh, and rich, and its armies were numerous, McClellan fought a good, wary, damaging, respectable fight against it. . . . Not to mention such lamentable failures as Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, it is easy to believe that with him in command the Army of the Potomac would never have seen such dark days as those of the Wilderness and Cold Harbor." [1] "Let military critics or political enemies say what they will, he who could move the hearts of a great army as the wind sways long

[1] Dodge, *Bird's-Eye View of the Civil War,* 109.

rows of standing corn was no ordinary man; nor was he who took such heavy toll of Joseph E. Johnston and Robert E. Lee an ordinary soldier." [2]

The idolatry of the officers and men of the Army of the Potomac was itself a eulogy.

Many of the officers, such as Porter, Franklin, McMahon, Humphreys, Powell, Heysinger, and others, have permanently recorded their high estimation of him and their unlimited faith in his capacity as a military leader, and General Upton's conversion to that view gives his praise special force.

But above all such praise stands the fact that with such virulent and implacable enemies behind him, with an army inferior in numbers in the Peninsula at his command, so great a general as Lee should not have been able to defeat him or even seriously hurt him, and that the last tribute of Lee to McClellan, somewhat similar to his chagrin after Frazier's Field, was his furious rage, as we learn from his friends, on the field of Antietam, when his plans were thwarted and his invasion of the North was blocked by a crestfallen mob aroused by the inspiration of one man,—McClellan.

The preeminent fame of General Lee is now firmly established, and of all the generals who became prominent in the great civil struggle none were so much alike as General McClellan and General Lee in their general characteristics. Both were intensely and sincerely religious, and they conducted their lives on the highest plane of honor and integrity. Both possessed fine minds, and both came into the Civil War fully equipped with all the resources of military science. Both were able tacticians and strategists. Both were cool, and self-possessed and absolutely fearless under fire, and both could reason and reflect calmly in the face of danger. Both were vigorously aggressive, not in a fitful or spasmodic way, but continuously, believing that aggression was a vital element of success in the business in which they were engaged. It was natural, it may be said inevitable, that each of them should have the highest esteem for the character and military ability of the other.

[2] Cole, *Under Five Commanders*, 98.

When the Federal army occupied the country about White House, on the Pamunkey, General Lee's wife and children were in the house. General McClellan, on learning of this, had Mrs. Lee and the children conveyed in her own carriage and attended by her own servants within the Confederate lines. As a special mark of respect, they were escorted by a troop of Federal cavalry which General Lee had commanded before the war. It was "a day off" in the war, and the Federal troopers were cordially and hospitably entertained by General Lee until evening, when they returned to their own lines.

While on the James, General McClellan sent a great quantity of hospital supplies to General Lee for the benefit of the Union wounded, relying upon his honor to use them, in a large measure at least, as requested, but also for the hospital generally.

At another time General McClellan appealed directly to General Lee to have a certain kind of guerrilla warfare on the James discontinued. The response was a letter of regret, and the warfare was stopped at once.

CHAPTER LXXI

THE TEST OF COMPARISON

Nothing can better assure us of the military capacity of General McClellan than a comparison of the campaign of the spring of 1864 with that of the spring of 1862. In 1864 the war in Virginia was conducted by two men whose high reputation for military capacity was already firmly fixed. General Meade, the hero of Gettysburg, was the Commander of the Army of the Potomac, and with him, supervising his work, was General Grant, the hero of Vicksburg and of Forts Henry and Donelson,—the General-in-Chief of all the armies of the nation.

When General Grant came to Washington at the request of the President in March, 1864, Mr. Lincoln told him of his eagerness to capture Richmond, and asked him if he thought he could accomplish it. "Yes," replied General Grant; "if I can have the men." The President warmly rejoined, "You can have all the men you want." McClellan in 1862 had no such assurance. His views as to the necessary strength of the invading army were ignored, and the army with which he was to start was not half so great as General Grant's, compared to the army of Lee when the time of battle came. He had scarcely lost sight of Washington and all his army had not moved when one-third of this already insufficient force was taken away from him. General Grant, though in the field, was allowed to hold his control as General-in-Chief of all the armies. This enabled him to enlarge his own army from the other Union armies in Virginia, and at the same time prevent Lee's army from being reinforced, by keeping the other Rebel forces busy elsewhere. McClellan, on the contrary, was deprived of the control of any army except the two-thirds of the Army of the Potomac which was left

with him, and as the result, reinforcements poured into Richmond swiftly from all the South and from the West. During General Grant's advance the enlisting offices were kept running more briskly than ever, and reinforcements were hurried to him until, before he reached the James, more fresh soldiers had been supplied than were in Lee's army at the outset. What a contrast with the treatment of McClellan! The moment his campaign began, all the recruiting offices were discontinued without consulting him, as if the Government wished to leave no doubt in his mind of its hostile attitude.

The Confederates claimed that the Union army narrowly escaped destruction at the passage of the North Anna; that the delinquency of General Longstreet alone saved it. How, then, would it have been saved if, as with McClellan, a third of it had been withdrawn just after General Grant started forward? We are told that if General Grant had been in the Peninsula with McClellan's two-thirds of an army he would have pushed boldly across the Warwick, in spite of the flooded river and the intrenchments beyond it. In that case the disaster suffered by him under circumstances infinitely more favorable convince us that his army would have been annihilated in the attempted crossing of the river. The idea has been widely prevalent that General Grant despised fortified lines and had the faculty of marching an army over them as if they were windrows in a hay field. These were his views early in the war. But Vicksburg made him suspect that he might be wrong; and his ineffective assaults upon Lee's entrenched lines, and especially his terrible losses at Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg, completed the demonstration. His official despatches to Meade of July 12, 27, 30, of October 2 and 24, and to Butler of October 24, forbidding attacks on entrenched positions, prove how absolutely he had abandoned his former views.

There was no suggestion as to when General Grant should start. That was left entirely to him, so he set out when he pleased, which was two months after he had reached Washington. The season was a mild one, and he fixed the first week of May for the advance, because it seemed to him that

the rainy season would then be over; and when a rain did come on unexpectedly a few days later all operations stopped until Jove smiled again. McClellan was forced out in the midst of a long continued season of unusual rains. The military conferences of Mr. Stanton and the President convinced them that the way to end the war immediately was for the Army of the Potomac to hurl itself upon the army of General Lee and destroy it. But General Grant thought that the place which the Southern Commander had selected might possibly not be the best place for him to go. The Union army was at Culpeper; the Confederate army at Orange, 20° west of south, about eighteen miles away. Fredericksburg lay 40° south of east, thirty miles distant. Instead of advancing to the southwest directly upon Lee, as the Secretary of War or the President wished him to do, General Grant struck out to the southeast directly toward Fredericksburg, crossing the Rapidan at Germanna and Ely Fords. This was surely the wiser course, as it forced General Lee to abandon his entrenchments and his picked fighting ground.

No one pressed General Grant to disclose his plans. On the contrary, the President said to him, "I do not wish to know your plans." But McClellan's plans were forced from him at a time when even adverse critics admit that secrecy was highly desirable and when it was specially important because of the nature of the movement, in order that McClellan might get between Johnston and Richmond before his designs became known. The attitude of the Government toward General Grant at all times, even when he suffered the most terrible losses, was that of cordial sympathy and cooperation; toward McClellan it was that of bitter personal enmity. And yet, with all these favorable conditions in 1864,—of good weather, of ample forces, of unfettered control,—what was the result? The closest the army got to Richmond was about twelve miles to the eastward, and when it reached the James on the 16th of June it had lost in its five weeks' march no less than 3,000 officers, and in all 62,000 men. "Shattered in its structure, its banners drenched in blood," as Mr. Swinton says, "it was the Army of the Potomac no more." A series of semi-disasters

had marked its progress. The Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg furnish sad chapters in our history. No assault on Petersburg or Richmond met with anything but repulse, and neither city was ever occupied until both were abandoned on April the 3d, 1865, when no assault was being made upon them. As the result of that campaign, we are told that "the war was in danger of collapse in the summer of 1864," and Washington was at the mercy of the enemy.

Keeping in mind the disheartening obstacles placed in his way by the unsympathetic or hostile attitude of the Government, and McClellan's comparative weakness of force, let us contrast Beaver Dam with the Wilderness, Frazier's Field with Spotsylvania, Malvern Hill with Cold Harbor, and McClellan's army when it reached the James with General Grant's army when it reached the James. McClellan's army nailed Lee to Richmond. Lee held Grant's army on the James in such contempt that in July Early was terrorizing Washington. As Lee routed Pope after the Army of the Potomac had joined him, it is obvious that if Lee wished to swap Richmond for Washington, he could easily have destroyed Pope's army while the Army of the Potomac was on the James, and followed the flying Union troops into Washington. So, on the other hand, it is evident that if McDowell's corps had been shipped over night to the James, Richmond's doom would have been sealed. Even as it was, we have seen that McClellan would have taken Richmond on August 14th, 1862, if permission had been given to him by Halleck.

All of these contrasting facts put the stamp of great military ability on McClellan's management of the Peninsular Campaign.

The one commander of the war whose preeminent ability is recognized with almost absolute unanimity is General Lee.

That just reputation is not founded at all upon his military contests with McClellan. No one can say that he showed a superior military leadership over McClellan or won any renown from his campaigns against McClellan anywhere,—in West Virginia, in the Peninsula, or in the Maryland campaign. And this seems a cogent argument in McClellan's favor.

Next to Lee, because of his brilliant campaigns, was Thomas J. Jackson,—"Stonewall" Jackson. Yet the name of General Jackson would be an obscure one in the history of the war, if he were judged only by the results of his contacts with McClellan,—keeping in mind of course that here he had not supreme command. At Frazier's Field he and Huger were both shut out from the fight, as we have seen, by McClellan's wise foresight in stationing Franklin at the dominant point.

If McClellan's suggestion had been followed, or if he had been given control of all the forces in Virginia after the second disaster of Bull Run, General Miles would have taken possession of Maryland Heights, and he would have detained Jackson so long that it would have been impossible for him to reach Antietam in time to save Lee's army from destruction; and so McClellan's plan would have shut him out here again. The "shut out" of Frazier's Field was repeated at Warrenton. Jackson was 125 miles away, beyond the Blue Ridge, and the passes were blocked by McClellan. The dashing campaigner of the Confederacy was again bottled up, and could have taken no part in the impending battle.

Antietam saved the North from invasion in the fall of 1862; so did Gettysburg in the summer of 1863. No one disparages the significance of Gettysburg or attempts to rob General Meade of the glory of the victory. A comparison of Antietam with Gettysburg may therefore be fruitful. In these two battles the situation of the contending armies was reversed. At Antietam Lee had a strong defensive position and McClellan was the aggressor; at Gettysburg Meade had a strongly defensive position and Lee was the aggressor. So at Antietam the advantage of location and conditions was strongly with Lee; at Gettysburg it was strongly with Meade. It was a disorganized and crestfallen mob, a panicstricken army, that of McClellan after the second battle of Bull Run, with which he was to fight Lee's victorious Southerners two weeks later, upon ground of Lee's selection. Yet this army barely allowed Lee to cross the Potomac before it was upon him. There was no disorganized mob under Meade at Gettys-

burg, for there was no rout at Chancellorsville, only an unsuccessful attack by vastly superior forces on the Confederate entrenchments at Marye's Heights. There was no panic, no disorganization, and two months elapsed between Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, while only two weeks intervened between the disaster of Bull Run No. 2 and Antietam. With an army of uncertain morale like McClellan's, it is the part of prudence to select a strong position and defend it. With an army of assured morale like Meade's, a general may more confidently assume the offensive. Yet it was McClellan who attacked at Antietam; it was Meade who defended at Gettysburg.

At Antietam McClellan had for battle 157 regiments of infantry (21 of which were of raw recruits), 15 regiments of cavalry, and 43 batteries. Franklin came at noon with the Sixth Corps, consisting of 27 infantry regiments and 7 batteries, but he took no part in the battle. Lee at Antietam had 179 regiments of infantry, 14½ regiments of cavalry, and 71 batteries.

At Gettysburg the Union army had 228 regiments of infantry (38 more than at Antietam), 34½ regiments of cavalry (19½ more than at Antietam), and 72 batteries (22 more than at Antietam). In these figures we have counted in the Sixth Corps.

At Gettysburg Lee had 168½ regiments of infantry (10½ less than at Antietam), 26½ regiments of cavalry (12 more than at Antietam), and 60 batteries (11 less than at Antietam).

At Antietam the full fruition of McClellan's plans and orders was lost through the dereliction of Burnside, but for which Lee would have suffered a disastrous and no doubt an irretrievable defeat. At Gettysburg the Confederates claim that the battle would have been won by them beyond any question but for the failure of Longstreet to carry out Lee's instructions. McClellan won at Antietam in spite of Burnside's defection; Lee lost at Gettysburg because of Longstreet's defection.

One day of battle was enough for Lee at Antietam, though

he had the advantage of position; but he was able to fight for three days at Gettysburg, though Meade had the advantage of position. As McClellan attacked at Antietam and Lee at Gettysburg, we would expect a greater proportional Union loss at Antietam and Confederate loss at Gettysburg, but the contrary is the case. The Union loss at Gettysburg was about double that at Antietam. Here are the figures: Union loss at Antietam 12,410, at Gettysburg 23,049; Confederate loss at Antietam 28,899, at Gettysburg 20,451. The Confederate loss was two and a half times as great as the Union loss at Antietam, in spite of Burnside; at Gettysburg it was three thousand less, in spite of Longstreet. And the Confederates lost 8,500 more in the one day's battle of Antietam than in the three days' battle of Gettysburg. This was largely due to the terrible weapon that McClellan made of his artillery. The Confederates always called Antietam "Artillery hell."

These comparisons are not intended to detract from the just reputation of General Meade, but to emphasize the fact that it must be an intensely prejudiced mind which, knowing the facts, can laud General Meade and be blind to the great military capacity of General McClellan.

CHAPTER LXXII

THE QUALITIES OF A GREAT COMMANDER

By the practically unanimous verdict of military authors General McClellan is conceded to have been a strategist of rare ability. His plans for the Peninsular Campaign, the Antietam Campaign, and the final campaign, in which he secured the division of the Southern forces and was apparently about to overwhelm Lee and Longstreet when he was removed, were all ably conceived.

It is also conceded that he had great administrative and executive ability, that in the organization of an army and in the infusion of proper morale he had no rival in the Civil War, and that he had a wonderful capacity for that grasp of details which Napoleon claimed was the surest proof of a great leader.

All agree that no other general of the war ever inspired his men with such confidence, admiration, affection, and enthusiasm. The ovations given by the Army of the Potomac to McClellan constantly, but especially on his reinstatement, at South Mountain and at Antietam, and upon his withdrawal, have been seldom equaled. In this regard even Napoleon was hardly a rival. McClellan saw that his soldiers were properly cared for, and they believed that he could achieve whatever he undertook. Such a leader can get the very best out of an army, and such power is naturally a prime element of military greatness. Physical courage is an important factor in successful generalship. The evidence is overwhelming and conclusive that McClellan was absolutely fearless under fire. Even hostile or lukewarm critics usually concede this. Such courage when combined with great energy, as it was in McClellan's case, constitutes aggressiveness of the highest order. McClellan was full of vim and energy; and, having an excellent constitution and a powerful frame, he labored incessantly

for the good of the army and the accomplishment of its ends. The events of McClellan's military career show not only aggressiveness but also a bulldog tenacity of purpose. Most generals, even among those of eminent ability, finding themselves in McClellan's situation on the Chickahominy,—unsupported by the government, disappointed in the hope of McDowell's arrival,—would have retired to West Point, the source of supplies; and McClellan displayed aggressiveness of the first order in cutting loose from his supplies, severing his communications, and marching resolutely forward to the James, in spite of the best efforts of a brave army much superior in numbers to his own. His aggressiveness was shown also in clearing away the Confederate force between him and McDowell. Not only did he force his way to the James, in spite of Lee's splendid army and all the obstacles of miry earth and stormy weather, but, as if in contempt of the best efforts of the enemy, he brought safely through a great train of wagons and 2,500 cattle. This is proof paramount of aggressiveness and tenacity of purpose.

The position astride the Chickahominy was the result of McClellan's aggressiveness and Stanton's interference. McClellan wished to make straight for Richmond from West Point, but Stanton wished to get the army between Richmond and Washington. So he ordered McClellan to extend his right wing to the north of Richmond. To hang on to his own plan and yet obey this order put the army, as none knew so well nor regretted so much as McClellan, in a false and weak position; and his maintaining that position for six weeks and extricating himself from it without injury is strong proof of a confident and aggressive spirit, submitting to a handicap which it knows it can bear. Speaking of Stanton's conduct during this period, General Michie, in his *Life of General Upton,* in amazing contrast with what he says in his *Life of McClellan,* says, "To his interference all our military disasters of that year may be traced." And again in the same work, speaking of the outset of McClellan's Peninsular Campaign, General Michie says: "By thus assuming the direction of military affairs both the Secretary and the President be-

came from this moment as much responsible for whatever of disaster might befall the army as if they had actually taken command in the field. No sooner had the commander of the Army of the Potomac sailed for Fortress Monroe than the disintegration of the forces which he relied upon for his purpose, and which had been promised him, began to take place."

This attitude of the Government gives a luminous significance to McClellan's aggressiveness under such disheartening circumstances. What superb courage inspired the heart of this man when he dared to write to the brusque and implacable Secretary of War, "You have done your best to sacrifice this army."

The twin brother of aggressiveness is prudence. This is what is meant by the wise old aphorism: "The better part of valor is discretion." There was in the military career of McClellan no Bull Run; no "horror" of Fredericksburg; no slaughter of Union soldiers like that of the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, or Petersburg. But his campaign would have supplied such parallels, if he had recklessly dashed his men against the strong defenses of Yorktown immediately on arriving in the Peninsula, or if he had tried to force them across the broad, flooded stretches of the Warwick. If the whole country were required to center upon one man as a type of the aggressive officer on our side of the conflict, there is no doubt at all as to the selection; and if a list of ten were made by each one of this vast jury, the same man would probably be first on every list,—namely, Sheridan. It would be remembered especially how at Missionary Ridge, though ordered to stop at the foot of the hill, he pushed the enemy over the crest and down the other side and was still pursuing when pulled back like a hound tugging at the leash. But Sheridan was prudent, too. The press of the country in the summer of 1864 howled at his inaction, his apparent want of energy through July and August and the first two weeks of September. Conditions were not favorable until then, so he waited, as prudence demanded, until the time was ripe for action.

Sagacity and foresight are so allied that they should be

considered together. Sagacity is merely a phase of foresight; it enables one to anticipate events. McClellan's sagacity was demonstrated at every step of his career during the war. The plan of a swift attack on Richmond by getting close without any chance of opposition is now seen to have been the most sagacious; so also was the plan of making the James the base of operations. The Secretary of War and the President insisted that he must clear all the enemy from the Potomac before setting out on his campaign. His foresight assured him that there was no need of a separate campaign for this purpose. The main campaign would secure it,—and it did. His sagacity caused him to make provision in advance for the march to the James, and his supplies were there and the gunboats ready to aid him when he reached there. His sagacity in planting Franklin with a sufficient force at the right spot shut out Huger and Jackson from the hard fight at Frazier's Farm. His sagacity caused him to seize Malvern Hill before the Rebels could get there. His sagacious advice to Halleck, if followed, would not only have saved Harper's Ferry, but would have delayed Jackson until the destruction of Lee's army at Antietam was complete. At Warrenton his sagacity brought about a separation of the hostile forces, left a chasm of 125 miles between them, and made their union in time for battle absolutely impossible.

McClellan was the king of artillery during the Civil War. No other general ever made such effective use of it as he. And those who came nearest to doing so, like Meade, were his pupils. This explains how it was that the Confederate loss was always the greater by far wherever he fought. Malvern Hill and Antietam are notable instances. Like Napoleon, he believed in the potency of effective ordnance, and verified his belief by the results.

General Grant, in his splendid tribute to Sheridan, has pointed out the attributes of a great military leader. "Sheridan," he said to Senator Hoar, "had no superior as a general either living or dead, if he had an equal. I do not mean in minor movements, but in all the elements of a great war. He had judgment, prudence, foresight, and the capacity of always

knowing the right thing to do, and the courage and ability to do it."

Celerity of movement is an excellent attribute of a commander. The enemies of McClellan say that he was wanting in this quality. But celerity is a relative expression,—to draw a heavy load at the rate of four miles an hour may be speedy for a draft horse, though slow indeed for a trotter hitched to a light vehicle. Both Jackson and Lee were astonished at the quickness with which McClellan advanced in the Maryland campaign, as they knew he had to reorganize a mob as he went. All the Confederates, from the President down, were surprised at the speed with which McClellan advanced upon Lee and Longstreet in November, 1862, and blocked the passes of the Blue Ridge, thus preventing a union of the widely separated sections of the Rebel army. He was only lacking in speed in seeking a Petersburg by recklessly dashing his beloved soldiers against the supposedly impregnable fortifications of Yorktown, or a Cold Harbor by forcing them across the flooded Warwick. Let it not be forgotten that by this method Yorktown was occupied and the Warwick crossed without losing a man.

Because of the delay at Fortress Monroe his civilian military superiors charged him with being "afflicted with the slows." But the delay was theirs, not his. If an employer sends a man to repair a great machine at a distant place, knowing that it will require certain tools and a certain number of men to do the work, yet fails to send the requisite tools or the requisite number of men, the delay inevitably resulting is the delay of the employer, not of the man he has sent. McClellan had not only informed the War Department of the necessity of naval cooperation but also did everything possible to secure this cooperation, on the express ground that the lack of it would cause great delay. The naval cooperation was not supplied, and when, as the result, the inevitable delay came, the authors of the delay charged McClellan with it. They further enforced the delay by detaining a third of the army, McDowell's corps, which they knew was to be used for a special purpose, a flanking movement. Having made it im-

possible for him to move, they then, with stupendous insolence, berated him for delaying, as if he had been a misbehaving urchin, and told him peremptorily that he *must* act. As to this delay we need occupy no further time, for McClellan has been absolutely and gloriously vindicated through the action of the Government itself. Senate Document No. 25 is a splendid tribute to and appreciation of McClellan's course at this special time and throughout the Peninsular Campaign, and is a convincing indictment of his civil superiors. This work is entitled "The Military Policy of the United States," and was prepared by General Emory Upton at the request of the Senate. It contains an exhaustive review of the Peninsular Campaign, step by step, and its praise of McClellan is the more notable because General Upton, as he says elsewhere, was "an abolitionist and the son of an abolitionist" and therefore so anti-McClellan that he remained cold and silent while the Army of the Potomac almost made the earth quiver with their cheers at the retirement of their beloved general. McClellan waited on the Chickahominy for the promised coming of McDowell. He waited at Harper's Ferry after Antietam for the promised supplies of necessary clothes for his army. These delays were delays of the Administration,—not of the Commander. Unfriendly critics say he should have gone on, clothes or no clothes, but such a man would not have attached his men to him as McClellan did and would not have been able to accomplish with them what he did. If such a man had led the army to Antietam, Lee would have destroyed it and ravaged the North. Under McClellan the army was invincible because of their confidence in him.

General Upton points out that, above all, the Administration was responsible for the delay at Fortress Monroe, because that was its plan, not McClellan's. His plan of landing at Urbanna would have avoided the Warwick and Yorktown entirely—and held Magruder there as in a sack. In spite of all the political cavilers, General Upton speaks with glowing praise of McClellan and "the army which he so brilliantly led to the enemy's capital." [1]

[1] *Military Policy of the United States*, 363.

CHAPTER LXXIII

THE INCONSISTENCY OF THE CRITICS

There are three classes of writers on General McClellan's military career.

First, those who see in him a commander of rare ability whose services to the Union were astonishing, in view of the obstacles placed in his way by the opposition of the Government. In this class are: the Comte de Paris, *History of the Civil War;* Colonel Powell, *The Fifth Army Corps;* General McMahon, *The Peninsular Campaign;* General A. A. Humphreys, *Peninsular Campaign;* Cole, *Under Five Commanders;* the Prince De Joinville, *The Army of the Potomac;* Hilliard, *McClellan and His Campaigns;* General Michie, *Life of Upton;* Le Compte, *The War in the United States;* Headley, *The Great Rebellion; Giants of the Republic;* General Upton, *Military Policy of the United States;* the Confederate commanders in solid phalanx and nearly all the chiefs of the Army of the Potomac.

Second, those who give some credit to McClellan, recognizing his handicapped situation, yet are dissatisfied with him because of the conditions which they should see arose inevitably from the handicaps which they record. Among these are Rhodes, *History of the United States;* Swinton, *The Army of the Potomac;* Palfrey, *The Antietam;* Colonel Dodge, *Bird's-Eye View of the Civil War;* and General Webb, *The Peninsula.* All of these give praise, and from the facts given by them this praise should be cordial, unstinted, and boundless; but they impute blame also in special instances, and in this they are irrational, for their own statements show that the conditions complained of flowed directly and solely from the frustrating action of the Administration. Palfrey's commentary upon McClellan is devoted entirely to the Mary-

land campaign. At every step of that campaign, though he had nothing better than a disorganized mob, McClellan acted constantly and entirely upon the offensive, and Lee entirely upon the defensive, as General Palfrey's work shows. Was it not so at Crampton's Gap, South Mountain, and Antietam? Yet his obvious partisanship was so intense as to permit him to say, "Lee knew that McClellan never attacked." What Palfrey had in mind was the period when McClellan was waiting, expecting McDowell to join him.

Third, those who take upon their shoulders a task more difficult than any of the fabulous labors of Hercules,—that of clearing the civilian superiors of McClellan from all blame. These writers are subtle and unfair in the highest degree. The great body of writers see either that the whole or a large part of the lack of more glorious results was due to the thwarting of McClellan's plans: and especially to the failure of Stanton to carry out the promise made just after he entered upon the duties of his office to furnish the means to win victories. But these writers in their intensely offensive partisanship defend every action of the government. General Barnard, *Peninsular Campaign;* General Michie, *General McClellan;* and General S. L. French, *Army of the Potomac,* are probably the only ones that belong absolutely in this list. Throughout the Peninsular Campaign, General Barnard was a warm and enthusiastic friend of General McClellan, as his letters given in this book show. But afterward, through some influence, he became hostile, and advanced peculiar opinions, oblivious of the fact that he was contradicting his own letters. At the battle of Gaines's Mill his failure to convey the message given to him by General Porter caused the partial reverse of that day. And it may be that later the feeling that he had done McClellan a great injury grew into an intense hatred. It is a human trait often repeated.

But General Michie is far more censurable. The publication of a series of biographies known as *The Great Commander Series* was in progress. Upon the list was General McClellan. This meant that the publishers believed that General McClellan, like General Lee and General Johnston, was a great

commander. General Michie was invited to write this biography. He should have declined; for though the injury done to McClellan is palliated slightly by the praise of his character and achievements in civil life, yet his book is a most subtle and ingenious brief to prove that McClellan was not a great commander; that he was unfit to command at all. It is absolutely irreconcilable with General Michie's *Life of Upton.* He gives one the impression constantly of an attorney working for a fee. Among all the authors he stands alone in his universal condemnation of McClellan's military career; and one has only to glance over the histories of the Civil War and his own biography of General Emory Upton to recognize that the commendations of his impartiality and freedom from bias in the preface to his *Life of McClellan* are sheer nonsense. General Michie wrote as if he were inoculated with the Stantonian virus. He professed to see no evil in the Government's acts, and no good in McClellan's military career; yet all the facts necessary to upset his conclusions appear in his book. And we may be thankful that we have his own evidence to the contrary in his *Life of General Emory Upton,* and that he was at least able to see in his amazing life of McClellan that in character, in disposition, in achievements, in civil life, McClellan was worthy of the highest eulogy. His description of the upright, active, efficient, gifted man in civil life contradicts the view of the man he depicts in martial life. The men are far too different ever to have been united in the same person and animated by the same soul.

The spirit in which General Michie in his *Life of McClellan* approaches the subject makes it impossible for him to discern the truth. The fatal obstacle of unconscious prejudice cannot be better illustrated than by this remark of Mr. Bradford, an amiable gentleman writing with good intent, in the *Atlantic Monthly* for October, 1914. He tells us that certain admirers of McClellan are indiscreet and unfortunate in their commendation, "exonerating their favorite at the expense of others whom we do not care to have abused." Here is a stupendous wall across the path of truth. Vindicate McClellan if you will, provided you cast no blame upon Mr. Stanton or

Mr. Lincoln. This is the attitude of many writers. But waiving many minor corroborative considerations, three unquestioned facts cast great blame on both Mr. Stanton and Mr. Lincoln, blame from which no author has made a serious attempt to clear them: One, withholding the third of an army already insufficient; two, withdrawing the army from the James, the final base of operations; and, third, the removal of McClellan just at the moment when the destruction of Lee's army seemed imminent.

General Upton, "An abolitionist and the son of an abolitionist," and therefore at first, as he frankly tells us, strongly prejudiced against McClellan, candidly points out in his admirable work [1] and elsewhere the cause of the Government's hostile attitude toward McClellan. It was politics solely: the dread of the prestige which military success would surely give McClellan.

[1] *The Military Policy of the United States,* at 286, 364.

CHAPTER LXXIV

THE SOLDIER AT HOME—CIVIC HONORS—THE END

Under other conditions, the soul of General McClellan would have fretted at his forced abstention from military service; but his longing to be at the front was appeased by the tender devotion of a loving wife and also by the reflection that his military services could never bear their proper fruit while Mr. Stanton conducted the war.

General Michie says that McClellan was left at home, forgotten.[1]

General Michie is mistaken. The political considerations and the personal hatred which effected the removal of General McClellan also prevented his reinstatement. Moreover, reinstatement would have been a confession. But the ruling powers could not forget McClellan. Events thrust him constantly before their eyes. The appeals of individuals and of the people, the terrible slaughter of Union soldiers in battle after battle and year after year, made remorse eat into the mind of the President; and surely more than all else created the deep melancholy which grew steadily upon him. The supersensitive delicacy of character of General McClellan appears preeminently in the fact that, though his high capacity made him desirous of administrative employment and though multitudes of suitable situations were offered to him, they were all refused because they came from a majority vote and not from a unanimous vote of the directors of corporations.

So he remained quietly at home with his wife and his "Baby Nell."

In 1864 he was nominated for the Presidency. He was not a candidate for the nomination. He knew nothing of the methods of practical politicians, and would not have used them

[1] *General McClellan*, 443.

if he had known them. And yet,—with all the Southern states disfranchised, with the immense advantage of Federal patronage in the hands of the Administration, and with the army not permitted to vote,—if the vote for General McClellan had been increased a little more than five per cent. he would have had a majority. He would not give unqualified approval to the platform of the Democratic Party, and in his letter of acceptance set forth his own platform. In August the cause of the President seemed hopelessly lost. His most powerful friends told him so, and he believed it. What turned the tide? The coming of Philip H. Sheridan. His victories of the Opequan, September the 19th; Fisher's Hill, September the 22d; and Cedar Creek, October the 19th, saved the day for Lincoln.

In January, 1865, McClellan went abroad and remained for three years. On his return, a great parade in the city of New York testified to the esteem in which he continued to be held. In that year he was offered the Presidency of the University of California, and in 1869 that of Union College, both of which he declined. On his return, he was placed in charge of Steven's Battery, a steam war vessel, and in 1870 was made Chief Engineer of the Department of Docks in the city of New York.

In 1877 he was elected governor of New Jersey. This position gave full scope to his marvelous administrative and executive ability, and his career of four years in that office is spoken of with universal applause. He declined reelection, and held no other position after that except that he was until his death a member of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Soldiers.

He spent his remaining years in retirement, the winters being passed at his beautiful home at Orange, N. J., with his wife and two children, and his summers at St. Moritz, in the Engadine.

He prepared for publication an account of his military services, but, as we have said, like Carlyle, he lost his manuscript by fire, and it is a public calamity that, unlike Carlyle, he was never able to replace it. McClellan's *Own Story* is

sadly incomplete. It is a partial collection of material for a work rather than a complete and elaborated production.

General McClellan died on the 29th of October, 1885, at his home in New Jersey; the highest honors were paid in his obsequies, as was fitting, for he was surely a gifted, efficient, exemplary man, in every period and in every function of his life, and a military leader of preëminent ability.

THE END

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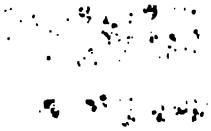

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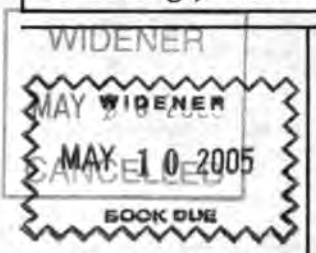

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